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[BEARDING THE BRUCE.]

THE LILY OF CONNAUGHT.

CHAPTER IV.

Dar'st thou then
To beard the lion in his den,
The Douglas in his hall? Scott.

So unexpected and startling was the announcement that the horses of king, princes and stranger reared erect upon the bridge from the suddenness with which they were reined in.

Sir Richard De Bermingham uttered an exclamation of surprise and indignation, which was echoed by his steel-clad followers.

"A deception! An ambush!" exclaimed the warrior, in a still louder voice. "The emissaries of the usurper Bruce are in the castle. Back! Back!"

"What knave dare use these words?" cried the king, in angry tones; but ere an answer could be returned the furious Desmond seized the ponderous battle-axe from his saddle-bow and swept down upon the dismounted warrior like a thunder-cloud.

"Sassanach dog!" he thundered. "Dare you taint the name of O'Connor with treachery?"

The doomed man threw up his shield, but the massive axe shivered it like glass and sank through the helmet into the brain with a sickening crash, while the corpse, by the shock of the horse, was cast far forward on the stones of the courtyard in a quivering heap.

"Knights of England!" exclaimed Sir Richard De Bermingham, seizing his mace, "draw off from your foemen and prepare for battle!"

With the quick precision for which they had become famous, the bright-mailed Norman horsemen wheeled and galloped away, rank on rank, like silver sea waves, and as the bugles rang out along the hosts the glittering steel caps of the archers were seen tumultuously breaking away from the proximity of their late allies. The red and green banners that had so lately flaunted side by side were ranged in opposing lines, and the grim warriors of either army stood with ready weapons awaiting the signal of onslaught.

But at this instant the Irish king spurred his steed forward between the opposing armies, and, casting the gilt truncheon he bore far from him on the green sward, seized the axe that hung at his saddle-bow.

"By the soul of my father, Sir Englishman!" he cried, angrily, his black brows lowering like storm-clouds, "it is ill done to insult the O'Connor under the shadow of his own battlements. It is ill done to receive, unquestioned, the baseless slander of a hind against a king!"

"Behold how baseless 'tis!" exclaimed De Bermingham, angrily, pointing with his mace toward the gate.

The king turned in his saddle, and saw the Knight of Carrick and his esquire, easily distinguished by their dress, in the act of vaulting on their horses, which were held by two equerries. Near them Connacht Moran sat, already mounted, and Prince Desmond stopped his headlong career as he approached them to speak in a short, questioning tone. He was answered by the Princess Eva from the balcony above.

"Enough!" he cried, and turning his charger's head he dashed with uplifted axe towards the Norman chief, but his speed was stayed by a motion from the king.

"What mean these strangers here?" asked the monarch.

"A knight and his esquire, messengers of peace and guests of Eva," was the curt answer of the prince.

"Ha! Is this your faith? Is this the repayal of the English blood shed in your cause?" cried De Bermingham, scornfully. "We espouse your quarrel and you bring us to your country to find your castle infested with foes."

"Insolent Saxon," commenced the king, but he was interrupted by the fiery Desmond.

"Royal father," he cried, "I crave this quarrel. It is mine, Saxon, thou hast assailed the honour of our house. Thy blood or mine must clear the stain. These troops of thine and mine have broken bread and bled together. Let them stand free from this—be the feud ours alone."

"I take thy challenge, prince," exclaimed De Bermingham, in a tone as fiery as his own, circling his horse for the charge. "Soldiers of England, the battle is our own; let none point lance or bend a bow in it. Heaven help me, as I am just, for see where come the foe, pranked in the trappings of the marauder Bruce."

He waved his lance toward the gate, from which three horsemen were issuing, and then, dropping it into the rest, spurred forward to meet the impetuous charge of Desmond.

The earth trembled beneath them, and they were already nearing the dreadful shock, when, with a loud cry, the Knight of Carrick dashed his powerful black charger between them like a thunder cloud, causing the lighter horse of the prince to reel from the blow, shivering the lance of the English knight with one well-directed stroke of his falchion, and making the dark blood spurt from his horse's head.

Both De Bermingham and the prince uttered loud imprecations, and cries of astonishment arose from both armies at the daring deed.

The front ranks on either side rushed forward, and their officers had great difficulty in restraining them from joining in the *mêlée*.

Meantime the Knight of Carrick, who had been carried far forward by the impetuosity of his charge, turned his steed and dashed back.

"King and princes of Ireland!" he cried, "I demand the right of fighting in my own behalf—of denouncing this haughty Norman as a dishonoured knight, a trampler on the rights of hospitality, an oppressor, a maligner of the absent!"

Loud shouts of mingled approbation and displeasure arose from the lines of the wondering soldiers, and the face of the English knight flushed crimson as he cast away the shattered spear and seized his mace.

"Sir Richard De Bermingham!" continued the Knight of Carrick, in thunder tones, seeming to rise to gigantic height in his stirrups, "I cast back in thy teeth the foul aspersions thou hast heaped upon me!"

"On thee?" said the English knight, spurningly.

"Ay! On me—the spy—the ambascader—the emissary trapped in livery—the usurper and murderer—Edward Bruce!"

At the sound of the warlike name cries of surprise and interest arose on all sides from prince and commoner, from mounted knight and kerna, and all pressed forward and stood tip-toe to catch a glimpse of the fierce warrior who had swept like a whirlwind through Ulster and Leinster, driving the Normans before him like chaff, and carrying the terror of his arms even to the hills of Munster.

"The Bruce! The Bruce! Lord Edward Bruce!" ran the explanatory words around the vale, and, with the suddenness of a tornado, the far-lying soldiers, taking this vague cry as a signal that they were attacked by the Scots, broke loose from the groves where they were already commencing; to pitch their tents, and, seizing their weapons, rushed tumultuously in the direction of the castle gate.

This was unfortunate, for the English soldiers, already excited by the cries of treachery, mistook the disorderly advance for an attack, and, wheeling back to back, discharged volleys of steel bolts and arrows into the masses of Irish foot.

King Fedlim, seeing the error and its disastrous consequences, ordered the trumpets to sound to check the advance of his troops. But the order was either drowned by the ringing charge sounded by the bugles of the startled English, or the Connaught soldiers were too much infuriated by the sight of their fallen comrades to obey it.

On they came with poised weapons and wild battle cries, and De Bermingham, seeing at a glance the danger of his force being enclosed between the main body of the Irish army and the gallow-glasses forming the left wing, gave the order for a general charge upon the latter, thinking thus to cut his way from the toils.

Meantime the Norman crossbows sent their deadly flights of steel into the Irish masses, and the light-coloured arrows of the English archers clouded the air.

These were counteracted by the dense showers of stones sent by the Irish slingers and the huge missiles picked up by the hardy mountaineers as they ran and hurled with fearful power into the ranks of the foe.

The havoc was dreadful, especially with the Irish, as the crossbowmen and archers gave the enemy the advantage at long range.

But nothing could stay the wild charge of the Irishmen.

On they dashed through the showers of death-dealing missiles with levelled pikes, crying aloud as one man the tremendous battle cry that inspires their descendants in the desperate charge to the present day.

"Faugh a ballagh! Clear the way! Hurrah!" The English spearmen, thrown forward to cover the archers and bowmen, reel and break before the shock and fall back in confusion on their supporters.

Immediately bows and cross guns are thrown aside—the bowmen seize the mace and battle-axe, and all in confusion—friend and foe whirling in indescribable conflict—swept against short-sword and axe to axe.

This portion of the English line is thus prevented from joining in the main charge.

But, immediately, a large body of Norman cavalry is thrown upon the rear of the charging Irish, hemming them perfectly in.

But the cries of the women from the hills and the thunder of the hoofs warn the gallow-glasses of their danger.

The rear men turn and kneel with scented pikes to receive the shock.

Many a gallant steel rolls in the dust with a shattered pike-staff quivering in his broad breast. Many a daring knight yields up his life beneath the heavy axe of the mountaineer.

But here the Irish are out-numbered—the grand charge of the English has swept away their reinforcements—they have no space to wield their ponderous weapons, and their desperate valour is in vain.

But hark! that swell of exultation! 'Tis the cries of their wives and daughters watching them from the hills.

What means that sound like the rushing of the tempest and the crashing of the thunder?

'Tis the hoof-strokes of the light horse and the tramp of the Irish kerna! 'Tis the crash of mail beneath the stones of the slingers and the darts of the javelin men.

"Prince Brazil for ever!" "A Moran! A Moran!" mingled with wild cries of "The Bruce! The Bruce!" rose high above the din of the conflict as the three warriors dashed forward at the front of the green-plumed line.

The English horse were thrown into confusion—they strove to rally, but the now wildly retreating archers and bowmen rushed among them, closely fol-

lowed by the furious Irish, and the confusion became a panic.

The mountaineers, ever noted for fleetness of foot, and elated by the triumphal cries of the sisters, wives and mothers who were witnesses of their valour, cut down all whom they could reach.

In the meantime the king and Prince Desmond had dashed with their main body on the rear of De Bermingham's force and scattered it to the winds, strewing the fields with slain. It was a perfect rout—only the shattered remains of the proud enemy being seen flying over the hills.

As the Irish bugles sounded the recall from pursuit the Norman general, recognizable by his crimson plumes and burnished shield, reined in his rearing horse on the sunlit summit of one of the hills and shook his mailed hand threateningly toward Castle Connor.

Desmond O'Connor saw the action, and, seizing a trumpet from a herald at his side, he put it to his lips and blew a blast of defiance so shrill that it seemed to rend the evening sky, and was re-echoed in a derisive cheer by young and old, woman and child, from one end of the valley to the other.

CHAPTER V.

To say you are welcome were superfluous.

Your presence makes us rich.

But now comes the revision which must attend every victory, however glorious.

The exulting people hurry anxiously down from their points of observation to where the last level rays of the sun are glittering in and splendour off cloven helm and shattered corselet, and lighting, with the glow of life, the rigid features of the dead.

The conquering bands, returning from the pursuit, chant a wild hymn of victory, and the beat of drums and the blare of trumpets sound triumphantly over the hills.

But neither drum beat, trumpet blast, nor triumph song can smother the sharp cry of recognition and the loud wail of women for the dead.

Many a warlike chorister who hears it ceases singing, and, looking into the ranks right and left, feels his stout heart throb as he misses the face of some comrade who will never more bear axe or spear.

But the triumphal shouts peal forth again, and they sweep gallantly on—

For some must weep while some rejoice.

So runs the world away.

King O'Connor and the princes of the blood, still mounted, stood before the barbacan to receive the toparchs and chiefs, who were returning at the head of their victorious forces.

As each body of stern warriors passed by the royal group the pike heads flashed like jets of flame as they were raised and lowered in salute, and the waving banners flapped with a sound like the wings of eagles.

A party of four horsemen, spurring rapidly across the plain, attracted special attention, and, on close approach, proved to be composed of Lord Edward Bruce, Sir Connocht Moran, and their esquires.

All gazed at the gallant stranger with that deep interest and admiration which bravery ever wins from the hearts of the brave; and the fiery Desmond, impulsive in friendship as in fight, spurred forward and met him with extended hand.

"Welcome, noble Scot," he exclaimed, "welcome to the country of the O'Connors. We cannot think so prompt a friend could ever be a foe."

Bruce looked at Desmond's gauntlet, and at his own, which was also dripping red.

"Thanks for thy kindly welcome, prince," he said.

"But, by the mass, this is stern friend-making."

"It is a warrior's greeting!" cried Desmond, bluffly, seizing the other's hand.

"So be it!" said the Scot, returning the iron grasp.

"Let the friendship of Desmond, O'Connor and Edward Bruce be cemented by the blood of their common foe—the Saxon!"

As the words, which made compact between the two princes were uttered the surrounding warriors, by common impulse, burst into a deafening cheer, and clashed their arms until the castle walls rang again.

"Royal father," said Desmond, as he and Bruce reined in before the king, "secure the jewel of this warrior's friendship. He stands alone among us, yet doubts us not as did you dastard Saxon at his army's head."

"Welcome to our castle, noble Bruce!" said the king. "We are proud to call thee guest. The tale of thy prowess has journeyed hither before thee, but, by the sacred staff, we little deemed we should see its first proof striking for the honour of the green flag of Erin. But hold, my lord, thou art wounded! Ho! call the leech."

Bruce had doffed his plumed velvet cap in answer to the king's salutation, and the bright blood flowed

fast from a wound in his head, the extent of which was hidden by the thick, clustering black hair.

"Nay, your majesty," he said, with a smile, "it is not worth heed—a mere nothing—a cat-scratch to put me in mind that velvet courting-bonnets like this were never made to turn off Norman axes."

He held up the tap, and the light shone through a cut in the crown.

"By Saint Andrew!" he said, with one of his soldierly laughs, "it might have been a scratch that had put good stop to all my usurping and marauding, as the Englishman styles it, but for the stout arm of my gallant friend, the Knight of the Falcon, here!"

He turned to where Connocht Moran rode behind them, for they were now in the courtyard, and the king and princes also gazed at the favourite with words and looks of affection.

The young warrior seemed faint and exhausted; his face showed a pallid hue beneath the shadow of his morion plumes. On noticing the attention bestowed upon him his cheek flushed slightly, but the colour fled an instant afterward, and a ghastly paleness took its place.

The suspicions of the English general had stung the pride of the O'Connors in the most tender part, and the manly trustfulness evinced by Bruce drew forth their hearts towards him in all their Irish generosity.

King and prince, father and son, vied with each other to do him honour, and the mingling of his name with the plaudits of the soldiers proved that the feeling had communicated itself to the lowest. What though they had been told that he crossed the sea to take their country from them and usurp their throne? Such thoughts must not interfere with their hospitality—he was a confiding guest. Had he not fought in their ranks, barely armed, in defence of their honour, and dyed his hands gory red in the blood of their insulting oppressors?

Obsequious equerries assisted them to alight, and the dalkins, or horseboys, hurried away the weary animals.

The closeness of the conflict had gathered every inmate of the castle to the casements and balconies, and the portals below were thronged. This prevented the removal of the signs of strife, so desirable before entering the presence of ladies.

The king took the hand of Bruce and led him up the steps between the bowing crowds, and into the spacious vestibule where the princess and her attendants were nervously blinding the arm of her brother Courard, a mere stripling, who had fleshed his maiden sword and received his first wound in the late fight.

After a few words of inquiry and approbation to the juvenile hero, who was undergoing the binding process with the dignity of a statue, the king turned to Bruce, and said:

"My noble guest, I place before thee the pride of my heart—O'Connor's child."

Bruce bowed very low as he said:

"I have already honoured myself by bending before the Princess of Erin and the Queen of Beauty."

Eva had thrown her arms around the king's neck and gazed past Sir Edward Bruce in a strange, startled manner, as if unconscious of his presence; but now, with an inarticulate cry, she released her hold upon her father, and, gliding between them, fled towards the entrance.

The king and the knight turned in astonishment to find a cause for this strange act.

The evening light showed them beyond the archway young Connocht Moran in the act of dismounting. His face was deathly pale and distorted by pain and his eyes were glaring ghastly. Even as he endeavoured to throw his leg over the saddle his head dropped, the shield, slipping from his nerveless arm, struck on the stones with a clang, and he fell backward into the arms of his esquire; the blood pouring from beneath his corselet and through the shells of his cuissas.

A woman's shriek rang through the darkening hall, and they saw the golden hair of Eva O'Connor floating towards the spot.

"Pardon me, your majesty!" said Bruce, hurriedly. "Yon gallant knight has risked his life for mine."

"I will bear thee company," said the king, leaning on his arm and muttering as they turned towards the portal. "Strange—strange—that—Eva—"

Bruce looked up, and saw that a cloud of displeasure darkened the royal face.

The esquires were bearing the insensible form of Connocht Moran through a postern at the foot of one of the towers, and the Princess Eva was ascending the steps with her attendants, her face nearly hidden by her shining tresses. Her father stopped to one side and spoke to her, and she looked up at him with a half-frightened, half-smiling gaze.

"She thought it one of her brothers," soliloquized Bruce, in whose head thoughts of the king's words and manner ran.

"The royal dove loves the falcon!" said a low voice in his ear.

He turned and saw Malise MacCallum; and, close beside him, the handsome face and glittering eyes of the stripling, Conrad O'Connor.

CHAPTER VI.

A jewel in a ten times barred-up chest
Is a bold spirit in a loyal breast. *Richard II.*

NIGHT closed over palace and plain, and all was clatter and confusion, preparing for a feast of triumph in honour of the victorious chiefs.

Each had betaken himself to his apartment to remove the stains and grime of the late encounter and lay aside his armour for garments befitting a royal festival.

Bruce was visited in his chamber by the surgeon of the palace, and his wound pronounced slight and dressed.

The doctor informed him that Connocht Moran was suffering from an ugly spear thrust in the shoulder, that the loss of blood had been very great, but the wound was not necessarily mortal.

Bruce declared his intention of paying an immediate visit to his gallant preserver, but the physician begged him to postpone it, as the patient was, at the present, feverish and delirious, and all excitement was to be avoided.

The knight agreed to be guided by his wishes, and the man of skill departed.

Malise MacCallum assisted his master to dress; and, having to await the signal of assembly to call him to the royal banquet, the knight strolled out on the ramparts to enjoy the evening air.

A wildly beautiful scene met his gaze as he leaned upon the parapet.

The moon was yet invisible, but not a cloud dimmed the lustrous blue-black sky, and the stars, "the bright and burning blazonry of heaven," shed a soft radiance on the earth.

At intervals in the far darkness twinkled the lights of the mountain shielings and cottages, where joy or sorrow held abode—joy for the safe return of loved ones or wild grief for the brave who would return no more.

Nearer upon the scene of the late conflict flickered the camp-lights, while hither and thither, flaring weirdly upon the gloom, passed the torches borne by the bearers of the dead, or the holy men who hurried to give the last consolations of religion to the dying.

A soft night breeze wafted up to the spectator all the strange commingling of sounds inseparable from such a scene.

The bustle of preparation in the castle—the iron tramp of sentinels—the hilarious bursts of the soldiers in the guard-room and the camp, the first near at hand and harsh, the last mellowed by the distance—the murmuring mingling of the voices of prayer, entreaty, and recognition from the battlefield—the tones of a plaintive dirge from the monastery rose to his ear; and fitfully and sadly stealing over the wild valley came the sob-broken *alla-lulla* from the cottages.

Strange and tumultuous were the thoughts that this picturesque scene raised in the mind of Sir Edward Bruce.

How this people had been afflicted by their English oppressors as barbarians, and looked down upon by his own countrymen as devoid of the spirit of independence and unfitted for self-government. How his own opinions had changed in the very short time he had been among them.

He had noted all the characteristics of what had been and still might be a happy land.

Rich in varied scenery, blessed with unbounded fertility, inhabited by a brave and generous people, whose proudest boast was hospitality—surpassing her neighbours in resources, equalling them in arts, and excelling them in learning and song, why should not Erin be blest and her children happy?

Alas! the foot of the spoiler had stained her green plains, and the cunning stranger had scattered the seeds of dissension.

The blare of the bugle had drowned the melody of the harp, and the thunder of the war-drum succeeded the throbbing of the tabor.

Bruce was beyond the age of extreme susceptibility, and his heart, trained from early years in scenes of turmoil and battle, was steeled against the shafts of beauty's eye. Yet, strangely enough, through all his thoughts he found the image of Eva O'Connor fluttering like a butterfly.

Did he think of the beauty of the land, she appeared as the personification of Erin; did music or poetry enter his thoughts, she flitted past with bright smile and waving hair, the perfect embodiment of both; did he dwell for a moment on the generous hospitality of peasant and prince, her white, jewelled hand was first extended in welcome to the stranger; and think of love with such an angel!

Then her frightened shriek at the fall of Moran and the dark frown on her father's face crossed his vision, and the words of Malise came involuntarily to his lips:

"The royal dove loves the falcon."

And immediately following came the sad look and foreboding words of the gray-haired seneschal:

"Alas, for their young hearts! Evil betide the time they think of love."

The curiosity of Malise had been aroused in regard to the antecedents of Connocht Moran, and through his inquiries Bruce learned that the young warrior was descended from one of the toparchs, or petty princes, whose territory had been seized and partitioned by the invading English.

The prince had died in defence of his birthright. His son, then very young, was adopted into the royal family of O'Connor as a page, and all was done that generosity and delicacy could do to make the youth forget his dependent state and deprivation of inheritance and kin.

He and the princes were reared together like brothers, and shared in the chivalric system of education which at that time prepared the youth for the dignity of knighthood.

From the age of seven to fourteen these young aspirants were called valets, or pages; and to the ladies of the castle was entrusted the honourable task of instructing them in the rudiments of religion and devotion to the female sex; inculcating principles of love, honour and bravery.

In order that the young students might practise in some degree the instructions they received it was customary for each youth to select some young, accomplished and virtuous lady at whose feet he could display his gallantry.

So it was that the Princess Eva O'Connor became at a very early age the queen of beauty, in the assertion of whose supremacy over all other queens of beauty whatever, the dauntless Sir Connocht Moran, aged ten, had pledged his knightly word to do battle against the world. What wonder that the docile page of fourteen and the courtly esquire of nineteen, should develop into the fervent knight of twenty-one? So thought Bruce, and involuntarily he repeated, audibly:

"The royal dove loves the falcon."

He had not heard the approach of steps, but he was startled by an angry exclamation, and the shock of some person striking against him in the darkness.

"Who goes there?" he exclaimed, extending his left hand, and instinctively grasping his dirk.

"No eavesdropper, my Lord Bruce," said a rapid voice, in which he thought he detected suppressed tones of anger, "but one who requires to know why hinting words applying to the princess of this house are bandied about within its walls?"

Bruce had never heard the voice before, and in the faint starlight could only dimly discern the outline of a tall, slim figure that seemed to wear a white scarf.

"Sir!" he said, "I know not who thou art. What meanest thou? These words point not to me."

"Ha! Do they not?" cried the other. "Was not the fanciful phrase you uttered but now when I stambled upon you framed for the Princess Eva?"

"Sir, I tell thee thou art over bold, whoever thou art!" cried Bruce, with rising anger.

"I am one to whom the name of the princess is sacred, and I will not have equires whisper it in the hearing of menials or knights cry it aloud at night upon the battlements."

"Now, by Heaven, man!" cried Bruce, grasping his sword hilt, "I grieve that night shadows hide the face of a man who dare thus address a Bruce. Away! lest anger overcome me and I forget I am a guest!"

"By my word, 'tis that which saves thee," the other cried. "My Lord of Bruce, when thou hast not these walls to protect thee we shall meet where no night shadows are, and the sunlight shall show thee the face of the 'man' who dares dare thee or any man that breathes!"

"Brave words!" cried Bruce, with boiling blood. "Brave words from a listener in the dark—a rampart skulker!"

The other uttered an angry cry, and a weapon flashed in the starlight, while a pair of bright eyes gleamed like those of an infuriated mountain wolf.

"By the ghost of my mother!" cried the stranger, "thou temptest me to do an evil deed—to stain with blood the house of hospitality!"

Bruce sprang to his guard for the expected blow, but at that instant the sound of numerous bugles burst with startling suddenness upon the night, resounding through the courts and corridors below, echoing back from every angle of the battlements, and ringing tremblingly up the gray walls of the keep, far above where Bruce and his strange challenger stood with suspended weapons, *en tableau*.

Seven times the bugles sounded—the signal of assembly to the feast.

Suddenly the stranger lowered his weapon and turned away.

"Not here!" he cried. "Not here. We shall meet again, my lord! Pray Heaven it be soon!"

"Stay! Who art thou?" cried Bruce.

"Thine equal!"

"Ha!" exclaimed Bruce, springing towards the figure, which had receded a few steps. "Thy name? By'r mother, I'll know thy name!"

"My name!" exclaimed the other, turning suddenly and speaking in a thrilling tone. "Thou shalt know it. It is a sound from the far past—it hides not in echoless caves—but goes forth upon the winds—it is—O'Connor!"

Bruce gave a start of surprise, for, as if the name had been a word of magic might, a bright blaze shot up from a pinnacle of the castle tower, and almost instantaneously from every mountain-top leaped living flames, like reflections of the first in many mirrors, and away, as far as the eye could reach, flitting, flitting, sprang the lights, darting up as if the subterranean fires had burst the earth's crust in hundreds of volcanoes.

These were the jubilee fires of the O'Connors.

Bruce started in astonishment at the form now visible before him in the light of the flaming cresset on the keep.

Who was his challenger?

Not the fierce Desmond O'Connor, as he had at first imagined on hearing the name.

No; before him stood the slight, immature form of the boy warrior, Prince Conrad.

He was dressed in a richly embroidered tunic with short sleeves, which left the white arms bare from near the shoulders, showing the bandaging on his wounded arm. A crimson mantle flowed from his shoulders, a jaunty cap, with a single eagle feather, was set on one side of his wealth of black locks, and what Bruce had mistaken for a white scarf proved to be a sling for the support of his wounded arm.

This now hung loose, for he had torn his arm from its support and the freshly started blood was staining the ligatures.

He had no arms but an ornamented hanger or skean, the empty scabbard of which was suspended at his side by a silken leash, for he still held the naked weapon in his hand.

Bruce could not repress his admiration of the gallant bearing and fine face of the wounded boy—a face almost feminine in its pale beauty—and the anger raised by the daring words lately spoken softened into a mixed feeling of wonder and amusement at the fiery nature which could find place in such a gentle form.

He was about to expostulate with him on his mistaken hot-headedness when the impulsive boy drove his hanger into its scabbard with a ringing sound, and, waving his hand haughtily, stalked away into the gloom.

CHAPTER VII.

And now what rests but that we spend the time
With stately triumphs, mirthful comic shows,
Such as befit the pleasures of the court.

Henry VI.

Soon, along the corridors, which rang to the notes of a triumphal march, passed bowing ushers, leading prince and prelate, stately knight and lovely lady to the royal banquet hall.

The esquires of the guests were ranged in two lines, near the door of the hall, and the procession passed between them.

Each esquire, as his lord appeared, detached himself from the line, and led him to the seat opposite which the royal herald had already suspended his shield in the order of his dignity.

Around the walls were hung the banners of the chiefs, while the royal standard shone over the canopy of the throne.

The light of many lamps flashed off the burnished shields, and caused the lofty, ornamented ceiling to glitter like a clear sky in a frosty night.

The balconies were filled with white-robed choristers and harpers, contrasting with the grim guard of honour ranged at the back of the throne and state chairs below.

A great flourish of trumpets and drums announced the approach of the royal family, and every guest arose.

The purple curtains at the head of the hall were drawn aside, and the white-haired chamberlain, ushered in the king, with the princess hanging like a wondrous jewel upon his arm.

He was followed by several ecclesiastical dignitaries under guidance of the chaplain of the palace. Behind these came the Princes Desmond and Brazil, but Bruce, to whom had been allotted a place near the royal seats, looked in vain for his challenger—the Prince Conrad.

The whole was closed in by a brilliant throng of gentlemen in waiting and ladies of honour, who ranged themselves in a semi-circle behind the throne.

One loud shout of welcome rang through the hall, causing the arched roof to resound, and wafting the old banners gallantly.

The march ceased, and the harp and choir, led by the bard Malachi, burst forth in a martial hymn, that moved every heart.

Now resounded the alarm, the warlike summons and the cheers of answering hosts, rushing forward to fight for fatherland, then the signal of onslaught, the charge, the fierce, ringing battle-cry, the clash of arms, the thunder shock, the shout of defiance, the cry of agony, the piercing shriek of terror, and the wild hurra of victory, rending the air like a thunder-clap, and dying away—away—away in far pursuit of the flying foemen, until it sank into a hollow moan, like the painful voice of the dying, and anon came wailing mournfully back and hung sobbing on the air in a solemn requiem for the dead.

Great was the effect upon the company.

On every face was visible the elation of the advance, the enthusiasm of the conflict, the pride of victory, and the softening of sorrow.

There was but one in that bright assemblage on whose ear the music fell without effect.

This was the Princess Eva.

As she took her seat her eyes involuntarily ran down the bright row of bucklers and colours on the wall, and her cheek flushed as it fell upon the falcon shield, which hung in its accustomed place, with the green and gold pennon above it. She glanced along the line of knights, but her expectation was disappointed—his place was empty.

The voices of welcome and the gallant forms, bent in homage to her state and beauty, were a mockery to her; her heart was with the wounded warrior on the couch of pain.

The music that thrilled all others fell idly on her ear; his heart bounded not to the martial measure, and among the swords that flashed aloft at the minstrel's will his was not seen.

The moan of the dying seemed to be trembling down from his apartment, and the chant for the dead fell shudderingly on her heart, for it seemed as though the solemn sounds told of his flight beyond the reach of earthly love or earthly glory.

As she turned her eyes away from the vacant place of Connocht Moran they rested upon the unoccupied seat of her brother—Conrad. A strange and unaccountable presentiment of evil fell upon her, and a mystic vision of the two, lover and brother, in deadly struggle, arose before her.

She turned away to dispel the fancy and met the stern gaze of her father fastened inquiringly upon her pallid face.

The music and the succeeding plaudits have ceased, the words of benediction have been pronounced, and the carousals are brimming up for the grace-cup. The king's cup-bearer is passing the goblet to the royal hand, and a page kneels before the princess offering morat in a golden chalice.

In the pause of preparation, before the master of the revels announces the pledge, the sound of quick, light steps is heard, and Prince Conrad is seen advancing up the hall.

His mantle is wafting behind him by the rapidity of his motion, and his beautiful face, almost as beautiful as his sister's, and seemingly made to be the abode of smiles, is darkened by anger.

Almost at the same instant, but with a noiseless tread, another form appears in the hall, and by the same entrance, but it advances by the opposite aisle, and the heart of Eva O'Connor quails as she gazes upon it.

It is the form of Connocht Moran.

His is not the garb for such high festival.

His gait is quick, but unsteady, his face is haggard, his long, black locks are dishevelled, and his eyes shine with an unnatural lustre.

"Merciful Heaven!" trembled on the lip of the princess. "Is it but his spirit I see, or have they quarrelled and come hither for appeal?"

Connocht Moran, to the wonder of all, passed his own place at the table, and approached to the foot of the dais in a wild, unconscious manner.

He made a deep obeisance to the king, and, catching the chalice from the hand of the page, knelt gracefully at the feet of the princess, and offered the cup with a strange, pleading smile.

"My peerless mistress," he said, "I return to my duty as of yore, and to the honourable right of defying the world in thy behalf."

The words were scarcely uttered ere the boy prince sprang across and dashed the cup from his hands.

With a loud cry Moran started from his knee and rushed toward his assailant.

"Advance, guard!" thundered the king. "Secure these traitorous madmen both."

A portion of the guard advanced, but Desmond had already laid his heavy hand on Connocht Moran's shoulders, and the impetuous Conrad was struggling in the arms of his brother Brazil.

The company, amazed at this strange scene, sat still and speechless.

The Princess Eva grasped the arms of her chair and sat rigidly erect, like a frozen corpse.

Her face was as white as snow, and the ice-like jewels of her diadem glittered cruelly and cold.

"Speak, sire! What means this daring outrage?" exclaimed the king, turning his fierce gaze from one to the other. "You, Sir Connocht Moran, are our honoured knight—nay, almost our child—why do you thus assail our dignity? You, Conrad O'Connor," he continued, vehemently, not awaiting an answer, "have you forgotten that you are in the presence of your king—nay, worse—forget your father?"

Prince Conrad disengaged himself from his brother's grasp, and bent his knee to the ground.

"My king—my father," he said, "when I forget thee as either may Heaven forget me. But did my saintly mother teach me the glory of our house that I should see it sullied?"

"What dost thou mean?"

"Look upon this honoured knight," said the youth, waving his hand towards Moran, who stood with glassy eyes and hectic cheek gazing mournfully on the terrified, white face of the princess, and apparently unconscious of all else. "He is almost thy son—almost my brother—he has ridden with the barons by thy standard when I have been forbid; now his pride has grown lofty, and he would set the mark of his foot upon the escutcheon of O'Connor!"

A low murmur of astonishment ran around the hall, and every eye was turned upon the impeached favourite.

Desmond O'Connor took his hand from the young warrior's shoulder and stepped back, gazing at him inquiringly.

The king's face grew as dark as night, his bearded lips were tightly compressed, and his dark eyes blazed angrily.

Connocht Moran stood as if petrified.

With scarcely a pause Conrad sprang to his feet and continued vehemently, pointing to the sunburst that shone on the royal banner above the throne:

"Shall the hawk mate with the eagle? Shall the falcon plume his flight to strike the sun?"

Connocht Moran, whose lips had been moving inarticulately, started suddenly around at the word "falcon," and, waving his arms high above his head, cried, in a voice that made the oak roof ring:

"A Moran! Ho! Strike for the falcon! Forward!"

"You hear the bold-tongued traitor!" cried Conrad.

"Silence!" thundered the king, the storm of anger which had threatened bursting forth in full force. "Is this a hostility, or a barrack to hold such brawls? Guards, seize that presumptuous traitor!"

"Traitor?" cried Moran as the spearmen closed around him. "Who dares to call me traitor?"

"My liege," said the gray-haired surgeon, hurrying forward, and bending before the king, "Sir Connocht is delirious. He has escaped my care. He knows not what he does."

"Away with him instantly!" exclaimed the king, waving them towards the door.

The young knight smiled bitterly, bowed his head low, and was led from the hall by the guard.

Desmond O'Connor's face had for a moment reflected the anger of his father's, but, as the fact of Moran's delirium became event to him, all the kind solicitude ever extended by the Irish people to those suffering under mental eclipse sprang from his generous heart towards his foster brother and fellow warrior.

He pressed the young man's hand warmly and whispered to the physician:

"Follow him. The guard will give him to thy care. See that he recover."

The king turned to Prince Conrad with darkened brow.

"For thee, rash boy," he said, severely, "who so far forgetst thyself as to quarrel with a mindless man, and mar the festive hour with brawls and accusations, go to thy apartments and let us see thee not till we command thy presence!"

The face of the youth flushed crimson, but not a word passed his lips. He pressed his hand on his heart and bowed his head to the king, then, turning away, he left the hall with proud step and glistening eyes. The princess had not removed her gaze from the spot where Connocht Moran had disappeared, when the bright crimson mantle of Conrad fluttered through the entrance and disappeared also.

The presentiment of a short time before rushed on her with double force, and she dropped her face upon her arm and sobbed aloud:

"They have gone! I shall never see them more!"

(To be continued.)

AMERICAN POST CARDS.—The new postal cards adopted by the American Post Office Department have on one side a head of the Goddess of Liberty,

with the legend, "United States Postal Card." This side also contains the direction—"Write the superscription on this side and the communication on the other."

SCIENCE.

FIXING PHOTOGRAPHIC PRINTS.—All prints toned by chloride of gold change their purplish hue to a ruddy brown on immersion into the hyposulphite bath, but those which are sufficiently printed and toned in the first instance recover their proper hue between the fixing and washing operations. An acid condition of the toning baths, however, will produce pictures which are "flat, stale, and unprofitable."

HYDROGEN GAS.—The entire town of Buffalo, U.S.A., is now lighted by hydrogen gas, extracted from hydrate of lime, carburetted, and burnt with the oxygen extracted from the atmosphere. The cost of the hydrogen is about a penny per cubic metre; that of the oxygen varies with the price of coal, and is estimated at the value of 13 lb. of coal, say 2d. to 3d. The oxygen is nearly pure, containing only about three per cent. of azote.

UTILIZING TIDAL POWER.—Mr. H. Bushnell has invented a machine, the result of many years' thought, which is made to utilize the power that there is in the ebb and flow of the tide. It is so made that when the tides enter a wheel will turn, the invention consisting in preserving a constant motion. The power may be used to pump air into a large cistern, from which pipes could extend over a city, the compressed air being used as a motive power.

BORING AND CUTTING INDIARUBBER.—To cut or bore indiarubber corks, dip the knife, or cork-borer, in a solution of caustic potash, or soda. The strength is of very little consequence, but it should not be weaker than the ordinary reagent solution. Alcohol is generally recommended, and it works well until it evaporates, which is generally long before the cork is cut or bored through, and more has to be applied; water acts just as well as alcohol, and lasts longer. When, however, a tolerably sharp knife is moistened with soda-lye it goes through indiarubber quite as easily as through common cork, and the same may be said of a cork-borer of whatever size. Inch holes have frequently been bored in large caoutchouc stoppers, perfectly smooth and cylindrical, by this method. In order to finish the hole without the usual contraction of its diameter the stopper should be held firmly against a flat surface of common cork till the borer passes into the latter.

EXTRACTING VEGETABLE COLOURING MATTER.—The green colouring matter of leaves, known as chlorophyll, can be extracted by chopping up green leaves or grass with a knife, and digesting with strong alcohol. A deep green solution is produced, which is strongly fluorescent. If this solution is evaporated gently to dryness, a splendid red colour often appears on the edges of the residue, while comparatively pure chlorophyll is deposited in the centre. This red colour, found principally in autumn, and called erythrophyll, is an oxidation product, and may be extracted from the residue by treatment with water. On redissolving the purified residue in alcohol or carbon disulphide the green colouring matter may be obtained almost pure. Analogous processes may be employed for most other vegetable colouring matters, comparatively few being soluble in water. Many yellow and orange colours may be separated by shaking the alcoholic solution with carbon disulphide, when the yellow colour becomes in a great measure dissolved in the heavier liquid which settles to the bottom.

NEW COALFIELD.—The report that coal has been discovered on Mr. Chubb's land at Buckland Rippers, near Dorchester, at a depth of no greater than 60 feet, has created much interest in that locality. On inquiry we find the report requires some qualification, for though coal has been found in very thin layers, no seam has yet been reached. A shaft, however, is being sunk in an enclosure several acres in extent, known as Payne's Close, and the practical miner superintending the boring is confident of striking coal lower down, at a depth of 80 feet, the upper layers indicating the existence of good coal lower down. In their course they have met with thin veins of coal similar to the cannel of North Wales, which has burnt with a bright flame, and the only shale excavated burns freely, and produces great heat. Buckland Rippers has from time to time during the past 25 years been "bored" for coal, but the "prospecting" has not been systematically persevered in, the mineral possessing oily properties. Considering the present high prices of the commodity, the discovery of a field of "black diamonds" in their midst is naturally of concern and interest to the inhabitants of pastoral Dorset.



[SOMETHING WRONG.]

MARIGOLD.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

*"The Image in the Heart," "Sweet Eglantine,"
"The Three Passions," &c., &c."*

CHAPTER XLI.

Ah! rather ask what will not woman dare?

CARMEN had taken a bold and decided step, the result of which she could not at present foresee.

As far as she knew Arthur Everton was dead, Izard had gone down in the ill-fated "Marigold," and Mercedes had ceased to exist when the boat disappeared in the storm rack. Therefore she was alone in the world, and she determined to personate the unfortunate daughter of Marshall Chabot.

How far she would be successful was a question of the future; but what could be effected by audacity and a firm will she did not doubt she should be able to accomplish.

The captain of the ship which had received her went in first to Mr. Anglesey, who was engaged in his counting-house in Bristol.

Carmen remained sitting in the fly which had brought her from the ship.

In a few minutes Frank Anglesey came out, and, getting into the fly, shook her most cordially by the hand, saying:

"My dear child, I have to lament the loss of my ship, but I thank Providence that you are saved. You are the only daughter of my only friend. In me you shall find a second father."

"Shall I not be a burden to you, sir," rejoined Carmen, "if I throw myself on your protection?"

"A burden!" he repeated. "How can you think of such a thing? You are my daughter from this day forth. I will at once take you to my house."

"But business—"

"Is over for the day," interrupted Anglesey, telling the driver to proceed at once to his country house.

"My father," said Carmen, as they drove along, "has led you to expect me. If not, I have letters in this casket for you."

"My poor child," said Anglesey, while the tears came into his eyes, "it is best for you to know the news at once. A telegram received yesterday by me from Marseilles tells me you have no father."

"How!" cried Carmen. "Is my dear father dead?"

"Alas! it is too true, Marshall Chabot, as he was called, died the night before last. You are an orphan. Heaven bless you, my child. In me you will find, I repeat, a second father."

Carmen acted her part well. She pretended to be profoundly affected at this startling news, though she was secretly glad of it. No one could now expose the dangerous game she was playing.

For some distance they proceeded in silence. Frank Anglesey was looking aged and careworn. He was very rich, but wealth did not bring happiness in his train.

His dear Marigold was still lost to him. At times she had lucid intervals, but her weak brain seemed incapable of throwing off the melancholy madness which had settled upon and marked her for its own.

Looking at her intently, he said to Carmen: "I feel I shall love you fondly. You bear a strange resemblance to my poor wife. Do you know her story?"

"I do," replied Carmen, who had learnt all about Marigold from Mercedes before the ship was wrecked, "and from the bottom of my heart I pity you. If it be in my power to soothe the unfortunate lady I will spare no pains to do so."

When they reached Frank Anglesey's sumptuously furnished residence Carmen was introduced to Marigold as Mercedes Marshall Chabot, but Marigold did not pay her much attention.

She seemed lost to surrounding objects, and when spoken to answered in a rambling manner, and immediately began to talk about something else which had not the most remote connection with the subject.

Ralph, whom we have spoken of as Frank Anglesey's adopted son, was absent, having gone away for a few days on a fishing excursion.

Carmen quickly established herself as mistress of the household, ordering the servants about as if she had always been the head of the house, and Anglesey allowed her to do exactly as she pleased.

A week elapsed and she became anxious to see Ralph, whom she expected was to be her future husband. Indeed, Mr. Anglesey did not leave her long in ignorance of his intentions.

When her assumed grief for the loss of a father had apparently subsided he took her aside one morning after breakfast, and, holding a letter in his hand, said:

"I expect Ralph home to-day."

"I will treat him as a brother," answered Carmen.

"You must do more than that, my sweet one," answered Anglesey.

"More!"

"Oh, yes. It is the dearest wish of my heart that Ralph and yourself should become man and wife."

Carmen cast down her eyes and blushed.

"Will you try to love him for my sake? It was your poor father's desire that you should marry him."

"I will try," answered Carmen; "though you cannot expect me to say more than that until I have seen Ralph and know something of him."

"Certainly not. I am perfectly satisfied with your promise, and now I will speak on another matter. I am your father's executor, and I find that you will possess a moderate fortune when his affairs are settled; this fortune I will trouble on the day you become Ralph's wife."

Carmen's heart beat high. Her good fortune had not deserted her, and she would be richer than she had hitherto imagined.

"I am not going to business to-day," continued Anglesey. "In fact I shall give up my office work to Ralph, who is my heir. He will be here soon. I expect much from this interview."

Carmen assumed a sad and subdued air, which befitted an orphan who was to meet for the first time the man whom she was to marry.

Half an hour elapsed. Then wheels were heard upon the gravel outside, and Anglesey exclaimed:

"Here is Ralph!"

"He cannot help loving me," thought Carmen.

"I am too lovely not to be admired, but whether I shall care for him is another thing."

Ralph was a tall, handsome young fellow, usually full of gaiety and life.

His kind friend Mr. Anglesey had advised him in a letter of Carmen's arrival, and that he expected him to treat her as his affianced wife.

A change seemed to have come over him. Instead of entering the room with a springy and elastic step, he advanced with a sad and almost sullen air, like that of a condemned man approaching the scaffold on which he is to terminate his career.

"Ralph," exclaimed Mr. Anglesey, "this is Mercedes, of whom you have heard so much." In a lower voice he added, "You see your future bride."

Carmen advanced to him as she saw him hang back a little, either through bashfulness or disinclination, and, seizing his hand in a childish and innocent manner, said:

"I am so glad to see you. Tell me that I am a welcome guest under your roof. I have so much need of a friend. Oh, if you knew what I have suffered lately!"

A prettily embroidered pocket handkerchief, delicately scented, rose to her eyes, from which she essayed to wipe imaginary tears.

Still Ralph said nothing.

"Kiss her, my boy. She will let you. Kiss away her tears," exclaimed Anglesey.

Unable to refuse, Ralph imprinted a kiss upon her cheek.

She blushed under this cold caress like a timid girl beneath the first kiss of her lover.

"What can I say to you, Mercedes," replied Ralph, "that you do not know already? Our house is your home. Whatever my dear guardian and kind protector has said to you he has said for both of us. You are no longer an orphan since you are with us."

"Thank you very much," replied Carmen. "My heart would have broken if I had not found such a home."

Ralph had scarcely dared to look at Carmen before, but now he carefully scanned the lovely features of the gipsy girl.

She was entrancingly beautiful. Her bitterest enemies could not deny that, and there was a charm in her childish manner which would have won its way to a harder heart than he possessed.

She seemed to throw around her a maddening fascination, which all were compelled to admit who came within the circle of her marvellous influence.

Ralph coloured slightly. He saw this transient blush, and exclaimed to herself, in an exultant tone:

"He is mine! He is mine!"

While Ralph said in his heart:

"She is too lovely; she maddens me! Oh, if I had not met Fanny!"

There was a whole history in those words, "If I had not met Fanny," which will be explained shortly.

Feeling that the interview had lasted long enough, Carmen begged permission to retire, as she had promised to walk out with Marigold.

When Mr. Anglessey and Ralph were alone together the former said:

"What do you think of her?"

"She is perfection," replied Ralph, with a sigh.

"Is she not? I call her ravishingly beautiful. She is just what my poor Marigold was before I went to India."

Ralph spoke the truth; Carmen's beauty struck him with amazement.

There is always something rapturous about a lovely girl, well dressed and well mannered.

In fact he would have suffered less had she not been so entrancingly fair.

The whole secret of his agitation can be summed up in a few words. Ah, how familiar are those words in many a life story.

He loved another. No one knew it. The secret was locked up in his own heart.

Had he but seen Carmen a year before, how different the current of his fate might have been.

His guardian's word was law to him.

Mr. Anglessey had resolved that he should wed the supposed daughter of his old friend, Wilfred Marshall Chabot.

He could force himself to marry her, but his heart was another's.

He could even bring himself to believe that in time he could love this superb creature—he already admired her—but the recollection of his little clinging, childish, loving Fanny, with whom the reader will in time make acquaintance, caused an anguish to settle on his mind which forced from him sigh after sigh in quick succession.

He could give his name, he could give himself to Carmen, but he could not give his soul, or his inner and spiritual self—that was another's.

To Frank Anglessey he owed everything—education, position, happiness. Anglessey had been to him more than a father, and to disobey him would have been a crime.

Therefore, when he exclaimed: "I wish you to marry this lovely girl, the only daughter of my late dear friend," he could only bow his head and murmur: "Yes."

It is a horrible thing, however, for a man of honour to be engaged to a girl whom he loves and to be compelled by a feeling of loyalty to break off that engagement and to marry another girl whom he does not love.

He had poured out his soul, on his knees, at the feet of this unknown and obscure Fanny; what suffering, what agony it cost him to say even the most commonplace words of civility to another.

Directly he saw Carmen he knew he was lost. He could see that she had marked him for her own, and she was his fate.

What could save him?

If that terrible Quirino came from Marseilles and exposed her he would be saved.

If the sea gave up its dead, and the real Mercedes appeared upon the scene, he would be saved.

If, thirdly, I said the gipsy could come back to life, and betray his sister, salvation at the eleventh hour would be his.

But these were remote contingencies, and as he knew nothing of them he could not speculate upon any such favoritism from fortune.

Young as Ralph was he was perfectly well aware that the strongest man is often as feeble as a child in the presence of such a woman as was Carmen, who was marvellously attractive and royally beautiful.

He looked forward with profound terror and anticipated remorse to the future.

Bound by all the ties which can bind a man of honour to one woman, he was compelled to cast his vows to the winds and be the slave of the beauty of another.

Pity him. The situation is not of his making, he is merely a puppet in the hand of fate, he has no more control over his destiny than you and I have, reader, over ours.

"You are a lucky fellow," said Mr. Anglessey, after a pause. "I can see that the girl loves you, and if I am not mistaken she is as amiable as she is pretty. You must arrange the marriage for an early date, Ralph."

"It will not be decent to hurry the affair, because her father died so recently," replied the young man. Clinging to a straw, he wished to put off the event as long as possible.

It is a world of chance, and so many things might happen in a few months.

"You are right," exclaimed Anglessey. "Give her three months of mourning, and then turn her grief into joy."

"Three months be it then," answered Ralph.

His eyes burned brightly, but it was the brightness of the fever which was consuming him.

His lips smiled, but a deadly sadness enveloped his soul.

When he quitted Mr. Anglessey he went to his private apartments, and, sitting down at a handsomely inlaid writing-desk, commenced a letter.

It was the saddest he ever wrote.

"DARLING FANNY," he began, "do not accuse me. Do not blame me. Pity me. I am the most miserable of men. My heart is broken. My brain reels. An inexorable fatality compels me to give you up, to cancel all the vows I have made to you, and to brand myself as a traitor and a coward."

"Unless a miracle is worked in our favour I shall never see you again. Ah, how much it costs me to write that awful word. Never, never. It will ring in my ears like a death knell."

"I give you back the faith you have plighted to me. You are free, Fanny. I break the oath which binds me to you. May you be happy. Alas! happiness is snatched from me for ever. It is my only wish that you should try and forget me, and succeed in doing so."

"Your friends will wish for money. They have a right to demand it for my perjury. I will not insult you by making any offer of pecuniary compensation, but your friends shall have all they ask for."

"Forget the unhappy being who can never forget you. That is my punishment. Oh, if it were possible to obtain the waters of oblivion and by drinking them blot out all the past."

"Farewell, my darling, my life, my dream. Farewell, a long and sweet farewell. How hard it is to say it. I had hoped for a life of bliss, kneeling at your feet and passing my whole existence in loving you."

"My destiny is inflexible. I must say again that cruel word, farewell. Would to Heaven I could die in writing it, but fate is pitiless. I must live to bear my punishment. I can write no more."

He placed this letter in an envelope and directed it to Miss Fanny Proctor, River Street, Bath.

"Happy letter," he murmured. "You go to my well beloved, whom I shall never see again."

He pressed his lips to the cold paper, as if the envelope could convey the kiss to the little hands of his darling Fanny.

"Happy, happy letter," he said, over and over again.

He went and posted the letter with his own hand, and as he dropped it into the box he exclaimed:

"The sacrifice is finished. I have broken with the past. The deed is done, and I never felt so mean and miserable before. Now I must go boldly on. Yet my punishment is one that numbers would envy, for it casts me into the arms of a girl, young and beautiful, who loves me, and for the sake of this poor girl I must hide my tears, I must appear happy. Let me learn to wear the mask."

He had yet to discover how difficult it is to act in real life.

To wear a mask may seem easy to some, but it is a task which only the heartless and unfeeling can accomplish with anything approaching success.

CHAPTER XLII.

Prince Henry: I never thought to hear you speak again.

King Henry: Thy wish was father, Harry, to the thought.

Shakespeare.

RALPH was a backward lover, and instead of seeking those sweet little titles that lovers so much de-

light in he tried to be away from Carmen as much as possible.

The weeks glided on.

Carmen was firmly established as Mercedes Marshall Chabot, and every one believed her to be the veritable daughter of the rich merchant of Marseilles.

She was regularly engaged to Ralph, and even Marigold brightened up in her poor, weak way when the marriage was talked about.

There was a strange fascination about Carmen for Marigold, just as there was for every one else. She seemed to be attracted towards her in a remarkable manner, and was never so clear-headed and lucid as when in her society.

This fact endeared her more than ever to Frank Anglessey, who indulged the wild hope that his dear Marigold might once more be to him what she was in former days.

What was it to him that Marigold's lovely hair was streaked with gray, and that her cheeks were pale and not so full? Was she not the only woman he had ever loved? and to such a nature as his a first love is all enduring and everlasting. The courses of the sun and moon might change, but his love for Marigold never, never! His was sublime devotion, and he had proved it over and over again. It was a love to marvel at and to admire in these days of conventional marriage and love bargains for ready money.

Two months had elapsed since Carmen's arrival at Frank Anglessey's house, and she had endeared herself to everybody. No one had an ill word to say against her. She was a popular favourite, and so fortunate and happy was she that she began to fear fortune would become jealous and play her some evil turn.

Her maid was her old friend Flora, who had married Teddy Bone.

They had been unfortunate in the business they started, and compelled to go to service again.

Teddy declared it was the fault of his wife's temper, but Flora said it was all owing to Teddy's love of company.

Instead of being in the bar attending to business and talking to his customers, Teddy was in the habit of going out and amusing himself.

The result when he came home was a domestic riot of no ordinary dimensions, and a great destruction of glass and crockery.

So they went back to service.

Mr. Anglessey very generously took them into his employ and they were the head of his establishment, Flora being lady's-maid, and Teddy becoming butler, in which capacity we must admit that he did as much justice to his master's port as the master himself did.

Flora was dressing Carmen's luxuriant tresses one morning when a servant came into the room and said that a persistent beggar wished to see Miss Marshall Chabot, as Carmen was called.

"A beggar want to see me?" asked Carmen.

"Yes, miss. He looks like a gipsy, and is in rags."

Carmen's heart stood still. Who could it be?

"Tell Rouse to give him some money, and let him go," she said.

"He will not go away. It is not money he wants, miss. He says he knew you at Marseilles," replied the servant.

Carmen was bold. She knew how to grapple with difficulties, and she was positive that the way to meet them was to face them in a confident manner.

The person who does not face a difficulty boldly and strive to overcome it gallantly is like the ostrich, which hides its head in the sand and thinks that it has outwitted its pursuer, when in reality it has only prepared its back for the fatal spear which will end its career.

"Let him come up here," Carmen said. "If he has known me in my happy home at Marseilles I dare say he has some claim upon my charity, and I never close my purse upon the poor and lowly. Show him up, and do you, Flora, leave us alone together."

The woman withdrew, and Carmen, left to herself, went to the window and leaned her forehead against the cold glass.

She dared not show any emotion before her attendants, but she feared in her heart that all was lost since some one who knew her in Marseilles had sought and found her.

Her only consolation lay in the reflection that he was poor.

"If he is poor," she thought, "I can buy his silence. He will see that I am not Mercedes Marshall Chabot, and he will have the power to denounce me, which, before I am Ralph's wife, means nothing more or less than ruin. But if he is poor—ah! that is where my power lies. Money is so powerful; men will sell their souls for money. Oh, what a strange power it has over us human beings."

While she was indulging in these reflections the door opened, and it was with the utmost difficulty that Carmen could suppress an air of surprise at be-

holding the new comer, who had so persistently sought her presence.

It is true he was a man of rags; his hat was battered out of all shape, and fortune seemed to have been making a football of him.

"Miss," he said, "I have with difficulty made my way to this town, and, hearing that you were in the habit of bestowing alms upon the poor, I thought that you would give something to a shipwrecked man, who was your companion on the voyage from Marseilles hither on board the 'Marigold.'"

When she heard his voice Carmen trembled. She recognized the man in spite of his miserable appearance and his rags.

"Silence," she exclaimed, in a commanding voice, which nevertheless trembled slightly, in spite of her admirable self-control. "Silence, or you will destroy us both."

The man extended his arms, and his face made as many grotesque movements as a clown in a pantomime before he begins to speak.

"My sister!" he ejaculated.

"Hold your tongue," replied Carmen. "You do not know who may be listening at the door. Be quiet, Izard."

"Carmen!" he cried, in spite of her command. "Is it really you? Do I behold my sister? Can it be you, Carmen?"

"For Heaven's sake," said the girl, "do not pronounce that name."

"Why?" he demanded.

"Because Carmen is dead."

"How! Are you not Carmen?"

"No."

"Nonsense," he replied; "I am Izard, your brother. I know you, and yet you say you are dead."

"You thought I was dead; did you not?"

"Yes, and I wept for you incessantly for more than a fortnight."

"Excellent brother," she said. "I did not concern myself so much about you. But you were right to weep for me. I have no longer a brother, and your sister is dead. I am not Carmen."

"Then in the name of all that is wonderful who are you?" asked Izard.

"I am Mercedes Marshall Chabot, the only daughter of the rich merchant of Marseilles, who has left me all his property. I am under the protection of Marshall's old friend Mr. Anglesey, and I am engaged to be married to Ralph, the adopted son of Mr. Anglesey, who will also give me a large sum of money."

Izard seemed stupefied.

He recoiled about, and would have fallen had he not seized a chair, which afforded him the support he required.

At last he replied:

"I understand you perfectly. You are a consummate actress. I thought myself clever, but I am not in the same field with you. Accept my sincere congratulations, Miss Mercedes Marshall Chabot."

"Have I done everything in a way that commands your approval?" she asked.

"To gain the position you have and the money you command is beyond all praise," he replied. "But explain to me how you have done it all."

"It is easy enough. Mercedes was drowned and I was saved, so I became Mercedes; and you?"

"I also was saved. Have you wept for me?"

"Not much I must confess."

"That is candid," exclaimed Izard, with a smile. "But I forgive you with all my heart. Your mind has been occupied with great affairs, and you could not bestow much attention upon a poor fellow like me. But as I have turned up very much in the fashion of a had half-penny what are you going to do with me?"

"Would you like to be the managing clerk in the office of Anglesey and Co.?"

"That would suit me to a T, if I had the handling of the cash," replied Izard.

"You can read, write, and cipher, I think."

"Quite enough to enable me to embezzle, but if you ask me can I keep accounts strictly and accurately I reply in the negative at once. I could not do it if I had had the most lovely commercial education that it is possible for the mercantile mind to imagine. It is a post that would suit me exactly."

"I don't doubt you," replied Carmen, "but I take such a lively interest in you that I should not like to see you transported. However, I will do my best for you. You shall not want for anything."

"That is all very well. At the present moment I want everything. I have been wandering about and doing the shipwrecked-sailor dodge until it is worn out. It was by a lucky accident that I heard of you."

"What have you done with your money? You had some."

"I will tell you," said Izard. "Listen to my odyssey. It is short and lamentable. When I was

cast in the sea on the night of that awful shipwreck—I will never go to sea again."

"That is a parenthesis," said Carmen, laughing. "Call it what you like. When I found myself in the sea I laid hold of a hen-coop—lovely thing a hen-coop."

"Another parenthesis. I wish you would cut your story short," exclaimed Carmen, impatiently.

"In this hen-coop was a little barrel in which I had stowed my treasure, and I determined that the hen-coop and I should be lost or saved together."

"The idea was worthy of you. Go on."

"During the whole of the day which followed the shipwreck we floated together. It was hard work and dry work, for I could not drink the sea-water, though it flowed so temptingly round me. At last I saw the land at a distance. It gave me courage, and I saw some beautiful white sand, which I tried to reach. A wave carried me forward and landed me high and dry—inside, not out—but I had the misfortune to knock my head against a piece of rock, and when I came to myself my beautiful hen-coop was gone, and my treasure with it. Now it lies at the bottom of the ocean, and I am penniless."

"Poor Izard," exclaimed Carmen, half laughing at half compassionating him.

"You may well pity me," replied Izard. "I have stamped the neighbourhood all this time as a beggar."

"I always told you that you could never get on without me," replied Carmen.

"I admit your talent."

"It is the least you can do. I have listened attentively to you. Now hear me."

"If I had ten ears they should be at your service," answered Izard.

"You admit that I am more clever than you."

"I will never dispute it again. Your idea of becoming Miss Mercedes, and marrying Ralph, is grand, putting aside your plan of making yourself the wife of Arthur Everton, which, had he lived, would have made you Lady Kimbolton. I cannot find words to express my admiration."

"Will you leave the direction of our affairs in my hands?"

"You say 'ours.'"

"Certainly; we have hitherto worked together, and our interests are identical," replied Carmen.

"Lead me as you would a blind man. You are my master, Carmen, and, as I said before, I am not in the same field with you. I am your horse, with the curb taken up three holes. Ride me as you like."

"Be deaf, be dumb," exclaimed Carmen. "Say nothing which the servants can lay hold of. I have a magnificent future before me, which you shall share."

"But the present?" exclaimed Izard, with a ludicrous grimace. "It strikes me very forcibly that I came to you as a beggar."

"You shall leave me in a very different condition. You want money. Hold your hat."

"Not my hat," replied Izard. "It has holes in it. My pockets are all right, as they have not had any very great strain upon them lately."

"I will give you money. Keep your own counsel. Go to some small inn for the present, and say you are a seaman waiting a ship," replied Carmen.

She opened a desk and gave him as many sovereigns as he could conveniently carry away with him.

"Have you got enough?" she asked, after she had given him handful upon handful.

"Yes, for the present," he replied, in a significant tone.

"Good-bye, then, and be careful how you seek me again. Let me know where you are however, in case I may want you."

"Good-bye, Mercedes," exclaimed Izard, with a ghastly grin.

"Good-bye, Mr. Caruthers," she answered, with a slight smile, just showing her lovely teeth, which were as white as pearls.

It did not take Carmen long to obtain employment for Izard in Mr. Anglesey's house of business. He was placed in a position of trust, and had every confidence reposed in him, which we need not say he lost no opportunity of abusing.

The days glided by with startling rapidity to Ralph, but with provoking slowness to Carmen, who longed for the day which would make her his wife.

Once married to him she did not fear exposure, she would be his wife, and a handsome settlement would be hers, which would make her independent—she could then defy Izard and laugh at Quirino.

Though she affected to despise the latter, she at times dreaded lest he might track her to England.

He had sworn she should never belong to another, and in pursuance of this vow he had basely assassinated Arthur Everton.

Of what cruelty and atrocity would not such a man be guilty?

Two months had elapsed, and but one more had to roll on before the marriage was celebrated.

Carmen's ambitious heart beat high.

What did it matter to her that Ralph was the coldest of lovers?

She did not care for him any more than he cared for her. It was a question of acting, and she was the more skilful of the two. Her performance was a great theatrical triumph, while he deserved to be hissed off the social stage on which he was playing such an indifferent part.

One evening the little party were assembled in the drawing-room.

Mr. Anglesey was reading a book. Marigold sat on a sofa, playing childishly with a necklace of pearls and humming a lullaby, such as she had been accustomed to sing to her lost child. Ralph and Carmen were at the piano. He was an accomplished player, and accompanied Carmen while she sang with great force and feeling some of those wild and touching ballads which had made her so popular as a street singer, under the able guidance of Izard.

Suddenly Teddy Rouse entered the room in the wildest state of commotion.

The music stopped, and Mr. Anglesey said:

"What is the matter, my good fellow? Have you seen a ghost?"

"No, sir," replied Teddy. "But there has been a railway accident close by—a passenger train ran into a goods, and—"

"The old story," interrupted his master. "Are there many hurt?"

"I am afraid so, sir. They are bringing one gentleman here, who seems badly knocked about."

"By all means let every attention be shown to as many of the sufferers as my house will contain," said Mr. Anglesey. "Send men with lanterns to the scene of the catastrophe. Nay, I will go myself. Ralph, will you accompany me?"

"With pleasure," answered Ralph.

"Oh, what a dreadful thing," said Carmen. "Poor people. I hope no one is killed."

"Tender-hearted creature. Heaven bless you," exclaimed Mr. Anglesey, kissing her forehead.

There was a noise of men's voices in the hall, and the sound of many feet tramping along.

The railway on which the collision had taken place was not far off, it ran along the bottom of Mr. Anglesey's park, so that the distance the sufferers had to be carried was not great.

"They've brought one, sir," said Teddy, "and I think it is the gentleman I spoke about."

Captain Anglesey prepared to go out and give the necessary orders for the reception of the wounded man, while he told Teddy to send a servant on horseback for a doctor, whose presence was imperatively necessary, without any farther loss of time.

Marigold rose, looking strangely weird and wild, an unnatural lustre burnt in her eyes, and as she approached Anglesey he trembled.

"Let me see him," she exclaimed; "my heart tells me he is here, and Providence has sent him to make some amends for the misery he has caused us."

"Who do you mean?" asked Anglesey, in surprise. She did not appear to hear his question, for she went on.

"Long years have passed, but I knew we should meet again before he died. I have a second sight which proceeds from the eyes of the soul, and I can tell that he is not far off. Lead me to him. It is for me to watch by his side while the ebbing tide of life flows away."

"In Heaven's name, what is the meaning of this?" cried Anglesey. "Who is it you want to see?"

"My husband," she said, solemnly.

"I am your husband," he said, becoming livid.

"No. I am not your wife. How can I be your wife when my husband, Lord Kimbolton, is living? Soon I shall be a widow, then—"

"This is madness!" gasped Anglesey.

"I am not mad now. My brain is as clear as yours," she answered, drawing herself up to her full height and looking like an inspired prophetess. "I tell you my husband is in this house, and it is my duty to go to him. Let no one hinder me."

Waving her hand majestically, she advanced to the door while every one fell back before her.

In the passage a motley crowd was assembled, and in their midst was a man lying upon a rude stretcher, which in fact was only a hurdle hastily torn down from a hedge.

The rude glare of torches fell upon his livid and blood-stained features; but, altered as he was, neither Marigold nor Anglesey had any difficulty in recognizing the once handsome and haughty Lord Kimbolton.

He had been on his way to attend at some race meeting in the neighbourhood when the train in which he was a passenger was run into by a goods train, the accident resulting in fearful injuries and loss of life.

It was certainly remarkable that he should have been brought to the house of his enemy, and it

was still more wonderful that Marigold by some strange, inexplicable instinct should have been aware that he was not far from her.

Trembling like a leaf, Anglesey in a faint voice ordered him to be taken to a bedroom on the ground floor.

Lord Kimbolton seemed much injured, and did not at first recognize any of those by whom he was surrounded.

The crowd dispersed when he was removed, and silence reigned in the hall.

Marigold sat by the side of the injured man, her eyes riveted upon his face, awaiting the advent of the doctor.

"This is no place for you, Marigold," said Anglesey.

"Hush," she replied. "It was he who stole my child. He is going to die now, and he will tell me where she is and what he did with her. I am not mad now, Frank. Let me stay here."

"I would rather you—"

She interrupted him almost fiercely.

"I will have my own way," she exclaimed. "You shall not thwart or hinder me. What law, human or divine, can separate a woman from her husband when he is on his deathbed?"

Anglesey groaned in anguish of spirit.

The past came back to him, and his storm-tossed soul told him that his punishment was not yet over.

It was a night of strange surprises.

When a man is driven by fate it is vain to try and resist the force of the current.

He bowed his head and said no more, seeing it was useless to urge Marigold farther.

A dead silence ensued, which was only broken by the stertorous breathing of the wounded man and the monotonous tick, tick of an ormolu clock on the mantelpiece.

(To be continued.)

LORD DANE'S ERROR.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

PERDITA and Georgie ate again from the stores on the sideboard. Perdita had a reluctance to going into any more rooms than she had done, and so looked no farther. After eating, she made up as good a lunch as she could of what was left, to take with them. She found some cold tea in a silver urn where she had not observed it before, and poured it into an empty champagne-bottle that was on the sideboard, and put that with the rest.

The task most dreaded of all remained—to coax the child to leave his dead mother and go with her. But she at last persuaded him by representing that they were going for some one to help her get away from "papa," which name to this unfortunate child seemed the most terrible and horror-inspiring that could be uttered.

They did not try to go out by the way through which Clever Dick and Griff had entered in the night, but climbed out of the window at which Perdita had come in.

They left the dead woman lying upon her cushions on the blood-soaked carpet, and Perdita had closed all the doors leading into the dreadful room. She then secured the window also, replacing the bars across the shutters; then, leading Georgie by the hand, with a whispered "Hush!" she stole down by the way she had come the night before to where she had left the horse.

She scarcely expected to find him still there, but it might be as well to see if he was. Clever Dick and Mrs. Griff had missed her, and they might have missed the horse also. Indeed, except that it seemed too good fortune, the chances were that they had not found either horse or cart; because in that case they would have felt assured that she was somewhere near, a fact of which they had certainly been doubtful the night before.

She passed into the stable-yard, looking either way.

The sheds were all empty. The horse was not in the yard. The gate was open.

Perdita's heart sank with misgiving. She was positive she had closed the gate the night before. Could the horse have got it open himself?

Possibly.

Cautious Perdita paused, however, and sent anxious, scrutinizing glances beyond the gate. Seeing nothing to alarm her, she advanced slowly, and passed through it.

The horse was nowhere in sight.

Avoiding the path she had come by the night before, she kept in the cover of the undergrowth, stooping as she went, and moving as stealthily as possible toward the spot where she had left the dog-cart. If that was gone there would remain no longer a doubt as to the vicinity of her enemies.

The cart was gone—gone from the place in which she had left it certainly, and nowhere in sight. She listened breathlessly for some sound—the horse stamping the ground or champing his bit—for the faintest rattle of the wheels. Complete silence reigned, except for the rustle of the wind and the chirp of the birds. Could they have gone quite away?

Perdita more than doubted it, and was very uncomfortable. She could not make her way to the road through this undergrowth with the child. She could not carry him, and it was too heavy for him to push through; his small feet tangled in it.

She went reluctantly into the open path and walked forward as swiftly as she could coax the child along. Once on the highway she thought she should feel safer.

She was hastening on, thinking that the low gate and stone wall which shut this from the road must come in sight every moment. Suddenly she stopped short, not at sight of the gate, for she was more than half a mile from it, but at sight of Clever Dick. He had stepped into the path in front of her, and had evidently been lurking among the trees, watching for her.

Perdita looked back and there was Mrs. Griff. Should she make a run for it? That was impossible with the child. She bit her lip and her bright eyes flashed; but she resigned herself for the present to what seemed inevitable. She waited where she was for Clever Dick and Mrs. Griff to approach her. She looked like an indignant young princess as she stood with her slight form drawn erect, her graceful head thrown back, and her red lips curving in scorn and anger.

Both Mrs. Griff and Clever Dick were a little afraid of her for a moment, but they were too delighted at the recapture of so valuable a prisoner to stop at trifles.

Mrs. Griff plucked Dick by the arm as they drew near.

"That's the young one I told you about," she nodded, her stone-coloured eyes dilating.

She stepped up to the boy, who clung to Perdita's hand, looking white and frightened, but, as before, making no outcry, and holding his childish head as loftily as Perdita did hers. Mrs. Griff looked from him to Perdita, a gleam of cunning and malice in her eyes.

"Maybe you know who he is?" she said, slyly, to the young girl.

"I do. His name is George Cascur," said Perdita, looking steadfastly at her.

The old woman chuckled as she had the night before.

"Is it?" she nodded; "pretty name, pretty name, ain't it?"

"Come along," interposed Clever Dick; "you can talk after we get into the trap. Are you going along without a fuss, young woman?" he said, addressing Perdita.

"What would you do if I said no?" demanded Perdita, angrily.

"Me and Mrs. Griff would very soon take you and tie your hands and feet," Clever Dick answered, promptly.

Perdita looked at him, her face white at the insulting words, her eyes blazing.

"Be careful," she said, in a low voice. "I seem to be entirely in your power, but appearances are deceiving sometimes, I warn you. Be careful how you speak to me."

Clever Dick retreated a step involuntarily, and Mrs. Griff laughed aloud.

He turned upon her fiercely.

"Be still, will you?" he growled; "how do I know but she's got a pistol or a knife about her?"

Perdita's lips curled again.

"See here," she said, "I'll make an agreement with you. I'll go quietly if you let the boy go with me and stay with me and promise not to harm him."

Dick exchanged glances with Mrs. Griff. The old woman nodded.

"We'll agree," said Clever Dick. "Stay by her, Griff, while I get the cart."

He darted off the road, disappeared among the trees, and returned presently with the vehicle which had been hidden there.

There had been originally but one seat, but Clever Dick had improvised another in the open space at the back of the other seat. It was simply a board stretched across on blocks, with no back, and straight and uncomfortable.

Perdita was to sit in front with him, the boy and Mrs. Griff on the board seat behind. But Perdita boldly declared that she would not get in at all if they did not put Georgie by her.

"Promise you won't try to get away and you may sit back there with him," said Clever Dick.

"Do you think I could get out of that without breaking my neck?" demanded Perdita, contemptu-

ously. "I would if I could. It's your business to see that I don't, and to keep me from it if you can. Of course I shan't promise not to quit your pleasant society at the first chance."

Clever Dick looked at the seat in question.

The back of the cart was higher than the front, a foot at least, and it did not seem that Perdita could get over it. Besides, she could not get away from him then. And there was the boy.

He assented to her demand, and she and Georgie climbed into the back seat with their bundles.

Clever Dick and Griff then mounted to their places and they started.

Georgie looked up wistfully in Perdita's face.

"Mamma want Georgie and Georgie want mamma," he said, in a terrified whisper, his little pale mouth all trembling.

Perdita's lips quivered.

"Shall I tell you a story, Georgie?" she said, "about a bird that had red wings and a yellow breast, and could talk?"

The little fellow's big black eyes glowed for an instant. Then he shook his head, and tears began to drip from his long lashes.

"I want my mamma, and my mamma wants me," he repeated, in a louder voice.

Mrs. Griff turned round and looked at him.

"Don't he know yet?" she asked of Perdita.

Perdita shook her head.

"Time he did then."

She burst into another of her queer laughs as she turned back to Clever Dick, who asked her grumblingly what was the matter now.

"Only to think of our coming all this way to get that boy, and taking him to Rylands. I might have hunted a lifetime without looking for him and his ma, where they was."

"What do you know about him and his ma?" demanded Clever Dick, suspiciously.

"Never mind," chuckled the woman. "What I do know I shan't tell you."

Her companion looked round at Georgie.

"Who is it he looks like?" he said, reflectively; "he makes me think of some one. Why—"

He nearly jumped out of his seat as he turned upon the old woman in his amazement.

"The boy looks like—"

Mrs. Griff clapped her hand over her mouth.

"Don't be an idiot!" she said, tossing her head towards Perdita with a warning look.

Clever Dick whispered something in her ear, his eyes nearly starting from his head.

The woman made no answer, but a pallor crept over her wizen face.

Clever Dick stole another look at the child, and Perdita saw that his lips were white as chalk.

"If I thought it was so bad as that," he said to Mrs. Griff, "I'd wash my hands of the whole business. It's what I never bargained for."

"Humph," said Mrs. Griff, in reply. "I don't see what you've got to do with it. It's all his look-out, and only makes him the better picking for us. I shan't mind being housekeeper for 'em for my part now, and you can be as good as him if you like. He can't do without us now."

Clever Dick brightened a little at this view of the matter.

"But what if anybody saw us coming out of there? Take that with what we are up to, and they'll be saying we did it."

"They won't. Nobody's seen us either. You're frightened of your shadow, Mr. Clever Dick."

Perdita had quick ears—fine and sensitive as Prince Long Ear in the fairy tale.

The pair spoke in subdued tones, but she distinguished nearly every word, and was puzzling over it all.

Suddenly a thought crossed her.

"Mrs. Griff," said she, in a raised voice, "is your precious nephew a married man?"

Mrs. Griff jumped in her turn. It was a minute before she looked round, and then there was an expression of mingled cunning, alarm and defiance in her face.

"What did you please to ask, miss?" she said, in a cringing voice.

"Only whether that villain who said you were his aunt was ever married."

"Dear me, no. What should put such a question in your head?"

"This," and Perdita's bold, bright eyes looked at her till she quailed. "I think this boy looks like him."

The old woman cowered visibly for a moment.

Then a look of ferocity crept into her viperish face. Her long fingers worked convulsively.

"You'd better keep that opinion to yourself, miss. It's a very dangerous opinion for you to hold under present circumstances."

"Is it?" said Perdita, coolly. "Dangerous to whom?"

"You."
"I should imagine it dangerous to some one else, Mrs. Griff. Very dangerous. You'll find it so," said Perdita, undauntedly.

The old woman rose in her seat at this, mad with fury, glaring at Perdita like a maniac.

Clever Dick made her sit down again.

"Who's an idiot now?" he asked, angrily. "Can't you wait till we get her inside walls?"

"Inside walls? oh, yes," muttered Mrs. Griff, talking to herself, "I can wait if I make up my mind to it."

Perdita smiled in her saucy disdain. She was not easily frightened at any time. Cool, courageous, spirited, she remembered that she had outwitted both this terrible Mrs. Griff and her clever associate.

She was watching her chances and hoping she might be able to outwit them again.

George had not spoken for a long time, but his little face had a pitiful, worn look, the corners of his mouth were drooping, and his eyes big with sorrow.

Perdita could scarcely bear to look at him, it made her heart ache so. She disliked too to see in his little face that fatal resemblance of which she had spoken.

They had been riding for many hours, choosing, the observant girl noticed, the loneliest ways, and avoiding all chances of meeting with any one.

"I'm getting hungry," said Clever Dick, at last.

"Well, you'll have to stay so," responded Mrs. Griff, sourly. "You ain't going to stop anywhere till we get to Rylands."

"Who said I was?" snarled he.

Perdita reached for the lunch she had brought with her. She opened the package, gave Georgie some, and helped herself.

Clever Dick and Mrs. Griff both looked around, but she paid them no attention. She and Georgie ate on as calmly as though they had been by themselves under the shade of a tree.

"Well, you be a cool one," remarked Clever Dick, looking longingly at the tempting edibles which Perdita and the child were disposing of with such relish. "Give me a biscuit, young one?"

Perdita withheld the child's hand without looking toward him.

Clever Dick muttered an imprecation.

"Come now," he said, "you're crazy; don't you know you'll have to pay for all this when we get to Rylands? You'll get starved yourself if you don't mind."

Perdita did not seem to hear him.

"Give me some, or I'll take it," growled Clever Dick.

"No, you won't," said the young girl, looking at him.

"Why won't I?"

Perdita smiled provokingly, but made no other answer. She and Georgie finished their meal, and she put the fragments carefully away, still without looking toward the others. Then she made the child lean upon her, and she told him stories till he fell asleep.

Clever Dick stared at her wonderingly more than once.

"She don't know what she's going to, sure, or she wouldn't be so sweet and unflustered," he muttered to himself, gloomily, as they jogged along over the tedious and lonely road.

It was almost dark when they at last reached the foot of the mountain, high up the side of which was Rylands.

Perdita had remained in the same quiet, unflurried, and unanxious mind, so far as could be judged outwardly, while her heart was sinking like lead every moment. She had watched every step of the way for some opening to make her escape with the child. She might possibly have managed it without Georgie, but she would not think of that. She felt that to leave him in Mrs. Griff's power was a cruelty she could not be guilty of.

Was there indeed no way to avoid being forced back to that living tomb up the mountain? Her bright and dauntless spirit arose in rebellion, but she saw no way to escape it. She looked around her at the various signs of fast-approaching night, and lifted her eyes to that heaven which had always cared for her, a lone orphan. Surely its guard was over her in this dreadful emergency as it had been before. She looked down at Georgie, who was still sleeping. He would soon wake now; the jolting of the mountain road would be sure to rouse him.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

A MONTH had elapsed since the day of Sybil's departure from the Normandy chateau. She was not an experienced traveller, and she found that journey very different from what the previous one had been, carefully tended and cherished by her worshipping husband's watchful care. Fortunately Louise, her

maid, was better acquainted than she with such matters, or it might have gone hard with them. They reached the English shore in safety, and went on with as little stoppage as possible to Graystone.

Perhaps something of what that journey was to Sybil can be imagined.

Young—not yet seventeen, remember—passionate, undisciplined, beautiful, high-strung and ambitious, unused to have a wish frustrated, she was going back to the gloomy home she had always hated. It was barely eight months since she had quitted it proudly, loftily, every vain and ambitious desire of her heart seemingly about to be gratified. How was she coming back? Stripped entirely of that poor grandeur which had never indeed been hers of right. Deceived, betrayed, the wife of a murderer—as she believed herself—she was coming back to the home she had so despised. It was the only shelter left her now, and she crept into it more miserable in her humiliation and bitterness of soul than words can tell. She found Graystone shut up, all but the servants' hall. There were only Speers and his wife in charge.

Perhaps it will be remembered that Speers had been the keeper of the dog, Gore.

Great was his amazement at the sight of his young mistress so changed and stricken, but he hastened to make things as comfortable as might be under the circumstances.

The house remained nearly the same as when Sybil left it, and she took possession of her old rooms.

Louise took upon herself the superintendence of everything.

Sybil was indifferent, buried in her gloomy thoughts, not caring what was done.

Some of the old servants were summoned back, and affairs at Graystone seemed likely to settle very much into the old grooves.

It was then that Baron Chandos made his appearance at Graystone. He had told Volney Heath that he should not concern himself about the welfare of his wife, yet scarcely had Sybil settled at Graystone than he made his appearance there. But then he had still in his possession the money Volney had given into his charge for his wife. Perhaps that was what he came for.

He went to the drawing-room and asked for the mistress of the house.

Louise went to him instead. She was afraid to tell Lady Sybil, as she still called her, who was asking for her.

But Baron Chandos scarcely heard her through her excuses before he sternly said:

"I must see the lady of Graystone."

Louise, terrified by his white, set face and black, bright eyes, said not a word more, but went at once and told "Lady Sybil" that Baron Chandos was in the drawing-room, and would not go away without seeing her.

Sybil looked haughtily angry, but she went to meet him.

Baron Chandos had not sat down. He stood cold and impassive, unbending as herself, in the middle of the room.

Sybil stopped by the door, as if she meant to make the interview a short one.

Her large, lustrous eyes questioned him. Her lips did not move.

Baron Chandos stood for a moment; then an angry light passed across his set face.

"My lady, you will never see your husband more," he said, solemnly, "but there remains a duty to be performed—one in which, however unwillingly, you must assist. Your husband's memory must be vindicated from the stains upon it."

"His memory—he is not dead?"

Cold as the baron felt toward her, and he certainly blamed her bitterly, he could not but notice the unnatural accent of her voice. He pitied, indeed, but he could not forgive her.

"You have said it," he answered.

A wall of anguish broke from Sybil's lips.

"Oh, I never thought he would die," she cried; "it cannot be. You think I was hard, and you say he is dead to punish me, do you not, baron?"

"My lady, such hardness of heart as yours is sure to punish itself. I told you that night he would never live to meet that awful charge. Sustained by your faith in him, he might have done so. That denied him, he did not care what became of him."

Sybil put her hand to her heart.

"How was it?—tell me!" she gasped.

Baron Chandos repeated in substance what he had told Lord Dane.

Sybil listened to him attentively.

"He disappeared, you say; you have no proof, then, that he is dead. I will not believe that he is."

"I have proofs of his intentions," said the baron, calmly.

"What proofs?"

"They were very plain to me in his looks and actions. He said there was only one way in which he could atone for the wrong he had done you; and when I reminded him that the law could not sever your marriage ties, not even if he were judged guilty of crime, he answered that he knew a way. I am as certain that when he left me that night he went out in despair to seek his death as I am that I am here this moment in the presence of a woman who never deserved one tithe of the worship he lavished upon her so recklessly."

A faint flush rose in Sybil's white cheek.

She was trembling, but Baron Chandos did not see it.

"I believe," she said, in a low voice, "that you are trying me. You think to work upon my feelings till I say I forgive him all the wrongs he did me."

"You mistake, Lady Sybil," said the baron, coldly, "you very much mistake. It is quite natural you should cherish the remembrance of your wrongs rather than the memory of poor Heath's insane worship of you. Do you imagine that after my last interview with you in Normandy and its results I could ever try to work upon your feelings, as you call it? No; believe me, Lady Sybil, I have done foolish things in my life, but never anything so senseless as that would be."

Sybil made no reply. She was too agitated to speak.

Singular as it may seem, she had not been in this room before since her return to Graystone.

The last time she had ever been in it till now Volney had been with her. It was when he brought the forged letter from her father.

Now the time, the place, the subject seemed to bring it all back before her fresh as though it had been yesterday.

She had loved Volney Heath passionately then, coldly as she had received him—she was not one of those whose emotions are all on the surface, plain to the eye.

Baron Chandos took from his pocket the same folded paper he had shown Lord Dane.

"When your husband stole away from me that night to destroy himself," he said, slowly, "he left this pinned to the breast of my coat. May I ask you to read it, Lady Sybil?"

Sybil extended her hand.

The paper fluttered from her shaking fingers. But she snatched it up before the baron could do so, and read it through.

A sort of shudder ran through her as she looked up afterwards, offering the scrap back to him.

Her eyes were dilating with horror.

"Would you like to keep it?" said the baron. "You can."

Without a word Sybil received it again.

"Do you believe now?" Baron Chandos asked.

"No."

But the same convulsive shiver ran through her frame as she spoke.

"What? When you have his own word in testimony that you are free? But I forget. You would not take his word now, if even his spirit could come before you to give it."

The baron spoke bitterly.

It was in Sybil's haughty soul to say:

"You forget yourself, baron."

But instead she said, after a slight pause:

"Is it my fault or my misfortune, Baron Chandos, if I find it so difficult to believe now, having been so faithfully deceived in the past? I never expect to believe in anything again. It is my misfortune, not my fault. But for the possibility of the truth of what you wish me to believe, but for your seeming sincere affection for one who, if he lives, must need friends now, I should not have submitted as I have to your singular style of talk. It is not for you to pronounce judgment upon me. I will no longer permit you to address me in any manner if you persist in forgetting what is due to me in the commonest courtesy."

Baron Chandos bent his stately head.

"I beg your pardon, Lady Sybil; I will not so offend again," he said, in a low voice, which he could not entirely divest of sarcasm even then.

"What was it you said when I first entered the room about vindicating my husband's memory?" Sybil asked, in a calm voice.

The baron looked at her, so young, so lovely, so unrelenting—thus she seemed to him.

"Lady Sybil," he said, "if you believe your husband to be still living, and wish to avenge all your wrongs upon him, you have now the opportunity."

"What do you mean?"

"The English law does not permit a wife to testify in favour of her husband when on trial for his life. But if she knows anything in proof of his having committed the crime of which he is accused she is compelled to state it."

Sybil looked at him in utter horror.

"What are you trying to make me do now, Baron

Chandos?" she demanded, angrily. "I believe you are a bad and wicked man."

The baron bowed again in his sarcastic way.

"Do you happen, Lady Sybil, to know anything concerning your husband's movements that night?—the night he went to that unlucky interview with your father, I mean?"

"I?—do you think I should tell you if I did?"

She had advanced gradually into the room during the conversation. She slowly retreated now, a strange look of fear on her beautiful face, while she repeated:

"Do you think I would tell you if I did?"

"There is something then," Baron Chandos said, a new brightness coming into his stern black eyes, his whole manner growing excited and eager. "This begins to look like business. Lady Sybil, permit me to conduct you to a seat."

He extended his hand, bowing low with an exaggerated politeness that seemed to exhaust Sybil's last remnant of self-control.

Her own eyes caught a passionate light as she glanced at him as though she would strike him, and then covered her face with her hands, sobbing wildly.

Baron Chandos stared in open and undisguised surprise.

What could have caused this outbreak? Could she in truth know anything of such serious importance concerning the events of that night? Could she know anything directly bearing upon her husband's criminality? Was that the secret of her unrelentingness—her passionate assertions that he was guilty of her father's death?

The baron grew suddenly chilly.

"I should not like to find him guilty of that awful deed, after all," he half muttered to himself. "Lady Sybil," he said, aloud, "you had better place confidence in me. There is something on your mind, I am sure, which it would relieve you to divulge."

Unconsciously he spoke more gently, more kindly than he had yet done.

That burst of crying in the cold and haughty Sybil had moved him strangely.

Sybil dropped her hands and turned toward him. "I don't understand you, Baron Chandos," she said. "I am afraid of you. If I knew anything would I dare tell it to you, who might, for aught I know, use the information in a way I should not like?"

"I will make an oath, if you wish, never to reveal what you tell me, except with your permission," the baron said, eagerly.

"But if they should try to make you tell—if the law should undertake to make you tell?"

"There is no danger. I was more than a hundred miles away at the time of the murder. What should make any one think I knew anything about it? And if they did I should not tell them."

Sybil reflected for a moment.

"What interest have you in knowing whether he—my husband—is guilty or innocent?"

"I believe him to be innocent. I have undertaken to prove it, and I shall."

"If you wished to prove that you should not have come to me."

"Why?"

"Because—"

Sybil paused, putting her hand to her throat in sudden, almost convulsive agitation.

In a moment she mastered it, however.

"What I know does not go to prove his innocence," she said.

"You may safely tell me," the baron hastened to say. "Pray do! It may have a very different bearing from what you imagine."

Sybil seemed to reflect again, then she said:

"I will risk it. I will tell you. It will be a relief to me to tell you, though I warn you that you can make nothing of it in his favour. I have tried that too often."

"Sit down first," suggested the baron.

(To be continued.)

CANON TREVOR says, in a recent letter: "I learn from Professor Garcin de Tassy's *Revue Annuelle* of Hindustani Literature for 1871, that there is actually a subscription on foot in Bombay to build a pagoda in London for the worship of Vishnu and Siva."

INSECT LIFE IN A COAL PIT.—Of late the miners employed at Maredge coal pit, a little to the north of Buckhaven, and on the Wemyss estate, have felt considerable annoyance in consequence of large winged insects fluttering around the flames of their lamps and often extinguishing them. A miner named William Sempie had his attention directed to several gimlet-like holes in the wooden props that support the workings, and on closely examining the same discovered live moth-like insects in the cavities. They are evidently foreigners. The wood of which the props were made came from abroad, and they have been in the pit for between three and four

years. The insects are in many cases just emerging from their birthplaces into active life under ground, and resemble wasps, but are not altogether like those in this country.

ROBERT RUSHTON'S DESTINY.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THERE was no one in sight, but it was evident that a party from a ship had visited the island. Had they departed? That was a momentous question.

Instinctively the eyes of both sought the sea. They saw a ship riding at anchor a mile or more from shore. "Give me your handkerchief, Robert," said Bates; "I'll signal them."

"It isn't very clean," said our hero.

"It'll do. See, they're looking at us."

"Your eyes must be good."

"I'm used to looking out to sea, lad."

He waved the handkerchief aloft, and felt sure that he had attracted the attention of those on board. But there was no motion to put off a boat.

"Do they see it?" asked Robert, eagerly.

"I think so."

"Do you think they will come for us? If not, we can put off in our boat."

"I think the party that planted that flagstaff hasn't got back. It is exploring the island, and will be back soon."

"Of course it is," said Robert, suddenly. "Don't you see their boat?"

"Ay, ay, lad; it's all right. All we've got to do is to stay here till they come."

They had not long to wait. A party of sailors, headed by an officer, came out of the woods, and headed for the shore. They stopped short in surprise at the sight of Robert and Bates.

"Who are you?" asked the leader, approaching.

Bates touched his hat, for he judged this was the captain of the vessel he had seen.

"I am a sailor from the ship 'Argonaut,' bound from Bristol to Calcutta, and this young gentleman is Robert Rushton, passenger aboard the same ship."

"Where is your ship?"

"I don't know, captain."

"How came you here?"

"We were left here. The vessel went without us."

"How long have you been here?"

"Six weeks."

"There is something about this which I do not understand. Are you here of your own accord?"

"We are anxious to get away, captain," said Robert. "Will you take us?"

"To be sure I will. There's room enough in my ship for both of you. But I can't understand how you were left here."

"It's a long yarn, captain," said Bates. "If you haven't time to hear it now I will tell you aboard ship."

"You look like a good seaman," said the captain, addressing Bates. "I'm short-handed just now. If you will engage with me I will enroll you among my crew."

"That I'll do," said Bates, with satisfaction. "I wasn't made for a passenger."

"My ship is the 'Superior,' bound for Calcutta; so your destination will be the same. My name is Smith. Do you know the name of this island?"

"I never heard of it before."

"I have taken possession of it in the name of the Queen, supposing myself the first discoverer."

"That's all right. To my mind the British is the best flag that can wave over it."

"We might offer the captain our boat," suggested Robert.

The offer was made and accepted; and, while the captain and his party returned in one boat, Robert and Bates rowed to the ship in their own, and were soon on the deck of the "Superior," to their unbought satisfaction.

"This is something like," said Bates. "The island is well enough, but there's nothing like the look of a good ship."

"I don't think I wholly agree with you," said Robert, smiling; "but just at present I do. I am glad enough to be here. We may meet Captain Haley at Calcutta," he added, after a pause.

"Perhaps he'll have got away before we get there."

"I hope not. I should like to meet him face to face, and charge him with his treachery. I don't think he'll be over glad to see me."

"That's so, lad. He doesn't expect ever to set eyes on you again."

Robert soon felt at home on the new vessel. Captain Smith he found to be a very different man from Captain Haley.

When he had heard the story told him by our hero he said:

"I like your pluck, Robert. You've had contrary winds so far, but you've borne up against them. The wind's changed now, and you are likely to have

a prosperous voyage. This Captain Haley is a disgrace to the service. He'll be overhauled some time."

"When I get back to Bristol I shall tell Mr. Morgan how he treated me."

"That will put a spoke in his wheel."

"There's one thing I want to speak to you about, Captain Smith. How much will my passage be?"

"Nothing at all."

"But I have some money with me. I am willing to pay."

"Keep your money, my lad. You will need it all before you get through. I was once a poor boy myself, obliged to struggle for my living. I haven't forgotten that time, and it makes me willing to lend a helping hand to others in the same position."

"You are very kind, Captain Smith," said Robert, gratefully.

"I ought to be. How long do you want to stay in Calcutta?"

"Only long enough to look about for my father."

"Then you can return to Bristol in my ship. It shall cost you nothing."

This offer was gratefully accepted—the more so that our hero had begun to realize that fifty pounds were a small sum to carry on a journey of such length.

At last they reached Calcutta.

Robert surveyed with much interest the great city of India, so different in its external appearance from Bristol, the only city besides that he knew anything about.

"Well, Robert," said Captain Smith, on their arrival, "what are your plans? Will you make your home on board the ship, or board in the city during our stay in port?"

"I think," said Robert, "I should prefer to live in the city, if you would recommend me a good boarding-place."

"That I can do. I am in the habit of boarding at a quiet house kept by a widow. Her terms are reasonable, and you can do no better than go there with me."

"Thank you, Captain Smith, I shall be glad to follow your advice."

So it happened that Captain Smith and Robert engaged board at the house of Mrs. Start, where it will be remembered that Captain Rushton was also a boarder, passing still under the name of Smith.

Physically he had considerably improved, but mentally he had not yet recovered. His mind had received a shock, and, as it proved, a shock equally great was needed to bring it back to its proper balance.

"By the way," said Mrs. Start to Captain Smith, "we have another gentleman of your name here."

"Indeed!"

"You will see him at dinner. Poor gentleman, his mind is affected, and we only gave him this name because we didn't know his real name."

Robert little dreamed who it was of whom Mrs. Start was speaking, nor did he look forward with any particular curiosity to seeing the other Mr. Smith.

When dinner was announced Robert and the captain were early in their seats, and were introduced to the other boarders as they came in.

Finally Captain Rushton entered, and moved forward to a seat beside the landlady.

Robert chanced to look up as he entered, and his heart made a mighty bound when in the new Mr. Smith he recognized his father.

"Father!" he exclaimed, eagerly, springing from his seat, and overturning his chair in his haste.

Captain Rushton looked at him for a moment in bewilderment. Then all at once the mists that had obscured his faculties were dispelled, and he cried:

"Robert! my dear son, how came you here?"

"I came in search of you, father. Thank Heaven I have found you alive and well."

"I think I have been in a dream, Robert. They call me Smith. That surely is not my name."

"Rushton, father. You have not forgotten?"

"Yes, that is it. Often it has been on the tip of my tongue, and then it slipped away from me. But tell me, how came you here?"

"I am indebted to the kindness of this gentleman—Captain Smith, father—who rescued me from great peril."

This scene, of course, excited great astonishment among the boarders, and the worthy landlady, who had been uniformly kind to Captain Rushton, was rejoiced at his sudden recovery. Feeling that mutual explanations in public would be unpleasant, she proposed to send dinner for both to Captain Rushton's room, and this offer was gladly accepted.

"And how did you leave your mother, Robert?" asked the captain.

"She was well, father, but mourning for your loss."

"I wish I could fly to her."

"You shall go back with me in Captain Smith's vessel. I am sure he will take us as passengers."

"So we will. You are sure your mother is well provided for. But Mr. Davis has, no doubt, supplied her with money."

"Not a penny, father."
"Not a penny! I deposited two thousand pounds with him for her benefit just before sailing."

"So you wrote in the letter which you sent in the bottle."

"Was that letter received?"

"Yes; it was that which led me to come in search of you."

"Did you go to Mr. Davis?"

"He denied the deposit, and demanded to see the receipt."

"The villain! He thought I was at the bottom of the sea and the receipt with me. He shall find his mistake."

"Then you have the receipt still, father?"

"To be sure I have," said Captain Rushton, drawing it from the pocket where it had lain concealed for two years and more.

Robert regarded it with satisfaction.

"He won't dare to deny it after this. I wish we were going back at once."

"Now, Robert, tell me all that has happened in my absence, and how you raised money enough to come out here."

So father and son exchanged narrations. Captain Rushton was astonished to find that the same man, Ben Haley, who had been the cause of his misfortunes had also come so near compassing the destruction of his son.

"Thanks to a kind Providence," he said, "his wicked machinations have failed, and we are alive to defeat his evil schemes."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

In due time the "Superior" cleared for Bristol, and among the passengers were Robert and his father.

Since the meeting with his son Captain Rushton's mental malady had completely disappeared, and the recovery of his mind affected his physical health favourably. His step became firm and elastic; his eye was bright, and Robert thought he had never looked better.

Leaving the two to pursue their voyage home, we return to Captain Haley.

After leaving Robert to his fate he kept on his way, rejoicing with a wicked satisfaction that he had got rid of an enemy who had it in his power to do him harm, for what Robert might suffer in his island prison he cared little. He took it for granted that he would never get away, but would pass his life, be it longer or shorter, in dreary exile.

Though the crew were ignorant of the circumstances which prevented Robert from returning to the boat, they knew that the captain had heartlessly left him to his fate, and all were animated by a common feeling of dislike to their commander, who never under any circumstances would have been popular. But there was no one among them bold enough to come forward and charge Haley with his crime, even when they reached Calcutta.

The captain moved among them, and his orders were obeyed, but not with alacrity. This satisfied him, for he cared nothing for the attachment of those under his command.

One day in Calcutta he had a surprise.

He met Captain Rushton when out walking. It seemed like one risen from the dead, for he supposed him lying at the bottom of the sea. Could his eyes deceive him, or was this really the man whom he had so grossly injured?

Captain Rushton did not see Haley, for he was partly turned away from him, and was busily conversing with a gentleman of his acquaintance.

Haley drew near, and heard Captain Rushton addressed as Mr. Smith. He at once decided that, in spite of the wonderful resemblance, it was not the man he supposed, and breathed more freely in consequence. But he could not help looking back to wonder at the surprising likeness.

"They are as near alike as if they were brothers," he said to himself.

He did not again catch sight of Captain Rushton while in Calcutta.

Before Robert arrived Captain Haley had sailed for home. But he met with storms, and his vessel received injuries that delayed her, so that his ship only reached Bristol on the same day with the "Superior," bearing as passengers Robert and his father.

Our hero lost no time in calling upon his friend Mr. Morgan, and actually reached the office an hour before Haley, the "Superior" having reached her pier a little in advance of the other vessel.

When Robert walked into the office, Mr. Morgan, who was at his desk, looked up, and recognized him at once.

"Welcome back, my young friend," he said, cordially, rising to meet him. "I am glad to see you, but I didn't expect you quite so soon. How did you happen to come in advance of the captain?"

"Then you have not heard what happened at sea?" said Robert.

"Yes," said the merchant. "I heard, much to my regret, of Captain Eldon's death. He was a worthy man, and I am truly sorry to lose him. What do you think of his successor, Captain Haley? He has never before sailed for me."

"After I have told you my story you can judge of him for yourself. I did not return with your vessel, Mr. Morgan, but with the 'Superior,' Captain Smith."

"How is that?" asked the merchant, surprised.

"Because Captain Haley left me on an island in the Southern Ocean, bound to a tree, and probably supposes that I am dead."

"Your story seems incredible, Robert. Give me a full account of all that led to this action on the part of the captain."

Our readers shall not be wearied with a repetition of details with which they are already familiar.

Robert related what had happened to him in a straightforward manner, and Mr. Morgan never thought of doubting his statements.

"This Haley must be a villain," he said. "You are indeed fortunate in having escaped from the snare he laid for you."

"I have been fortunate in another way also," said Robert. "I have succeeded in the object of my voyage."

"You have not found your father?"

"I found him in Calcutta, and I have brought him home with me."

"You must have been born under a lucky star, Robert," said the merchant. "Were your father's adventures as remarkable as yours?"

"It was the same man who nearly succeeded in accomplishing the ruin of both—Captain Haley was my father's mate, and it was he who, in revenge for some fancied slight, set fire to the vessel in mid-ocean, and then escaped."

Scarcely had this revelation been made when a clerk entered, and, approaching Mr. Morgan, said:

"Captain Haley would like to see you."

Mr. Morgan glanced at Robert significantly.

"I wish to know what explanation Mr. Haley has to give of your disappearance. There is a closet. Go in, and close the door partially, so that you may hear what passes without yourself being seen."

Robert was hardly established in his place of concealment when Haley entered the office.

"Good-morning, Mr. Morgan," he said, deferentially, for he wished to keep in his employer's good graces.

"Good-morning, sir," said the merchant, formally.

"Captain Haley, I believe?"

"Yes, sir. I succeeded to the command of the 'Argonaut' upon the lamented death of my friend, Captain Eldon. His death happened on our passage out. I proceeded at once to Calcutta, and after disposing of the cargo sailed for home."

"Your voyage has been a long one."

"Yes, we have had stress of weather, which has delayed us materially. I regret this, but did the best I could under the circumstances. I hope to have discharged my duties in a manner satisfactory to you."

"I cannot of course blame you for delay, since the weather was quite beyond your control," said the merchant, but his tone was marked by coldness, for which Haley found it difficult to account. He was anxious to remain in command of the "Argonaut," but the want of cordiality evinced by his employer made him doubtful of his success. He was not timid, however, and resolved to broach the subject.

"I hope, Mr. Morgan," he said, "that you have sufficient confidence in me to entrust me with the command of the 'Argonaut' on her next voyage."

"He certainly is not lacking in audacity," thought Mr. Morgan. "We will speak of that matter hereafter," he said. "Did my young friend, Robert Rushton, return with you?"

Now was the critical moment. In spite of his audacity, Haley felt embarrassed.

"No, sir," he replied.

"Indeed! I expected that you would bring him back."

"May I ask if the boy is a relative of yours, Mr. Morgan?"

"No, he is not."

"So much the better."

"Why do you say that? I am particularly interested in him."

"Then, sir, my task becomes more painful and embarrassing."

"You speak in enigmas, Captain Haley."

"I hesitate to speak plainly. I know you will be pained by what I have to tell you."

"Don't consider my feelings, Captain Haley, but go on with what you have to say."

"Then I regret to say that the boy, Robert Rushton, is unworthy of your friendship."

"This is a grievous charge. Of course, I expect you to substantiate it."

"I will do so. Shortly after the death of Captain Eldon, and my accession to the command, I found

that this boy was trying to undermine my influence with the men, from what motives I cannot guess. I remonstrated with him mildly but firmly, but only received insolence in return. Nevertheless I continued to treat him well on account of the interest you felt in him. So things went on till we reached Calcutta. He left me at that time, and to my surprise did not return to the ship. I was able to account for his disappearance, however, when I missed between forty and fifty pounds, of which I have not the slightest doubt that he robbed me. I should have taken measures to have him arrested, but since you felt an interest in him I preferred to suffer the loss in silence. I fear, Mr. Morgan, that you have been greatly deceived in him."

"I suspect that I have been deceived," said Mr. Morgan, gravely. "It is only fair, however, Captain Haley, to let both sides, and I will therefore summon the boy himself to answer your charge, Robert."

At the summons, to Captain Haley's equal surprise and dismay, Robert stepped from the closet in which he had been concealed.

"What have you to say, Robert?" asked the merchant.

"Captain Haley knows very well that his statement is false," said our hero, calmly. "It was not at Calcutta I left the 'Argonaut,' nor was it of my own accord. Captain Haley with his own hands tied me to a tree on a small island in the Southern Ocean, and there left me, as he supposed, to a solitary death. However, Heaven did not forsake me, but sent first a brave sailor and afterwards a ship to my assistance. The charge that I stole money from him I shall not answer, for I know Mr. Morgan will not believe it."

Captain Haley was acute enough to know that it would be useless to press the charge farther.

He rose from his seat; his face was dark with anger and smarting under a sense of defeat.

"I have not done with you yet," he said to Robert, and without another word left the office.

CHAPTER XXIX.

AFFAIRS in Millbury had gone on much as usual. Mrs. Rushton had not yet exhausted the supply of money left by Robert in the hands of his friend the lawyer. Her expenses were small, and were eked out by her earnings, for she continued to braid straw, and was able in this way to earn a few shillings a week. Indeed, she made it a point to be as economical as possible, for she thought it was very likely that Robert would spend all his money and return penniless. She had received no letter from him since the one announcing that he was about to sail for Calcutta, and this naturally made her anxious. Mr. Paine, however, assured her that letters were likely to be irregular, and that there was no ground for alarm. So she waited with what patience she could till Robert should return, hoping that by some strange chance he might succeed in his quest and bring his father back with him.

Meanwhile fortune had improved with Mr. Davis. He had lost largely by speculation, but had blundered at last into the purchase of a stock in which a considerable rise had taken place. It went up rapidly, and on the morning when we introduce him again to the reader he was in high spirits, having just received intelligence from his broker that he had cleared one thousand four hundred pounds by selling at the top of the market.

"Another cup of coffee, Mrs. Davis," he said, passing his cup across the table.

Seeing that his father appeared to be in good humour, Halbert ventured to prefer a request, which, however, he had little hope of having granted.

"Have you seen Will Paine's pony?" he asked, paving the way for the request.

"Yes," said his father, "I saw him on it yesterday."

"It's a regular beauty—I wish I had one."

"How much did it cost?"

"Thirty pounds."

"That is rather a high price."

"But it will increase in value every year. I wish you would buy me one, father."

"I think I will," said Mr. Davis, helping himself to a fresh slice of toast.

"Do you mean it?" asked Halbert, in the utmost astonishment.

"Certainly I do. I can afford to buy you a pony as well as Mr. Paine can afford to buy William one."

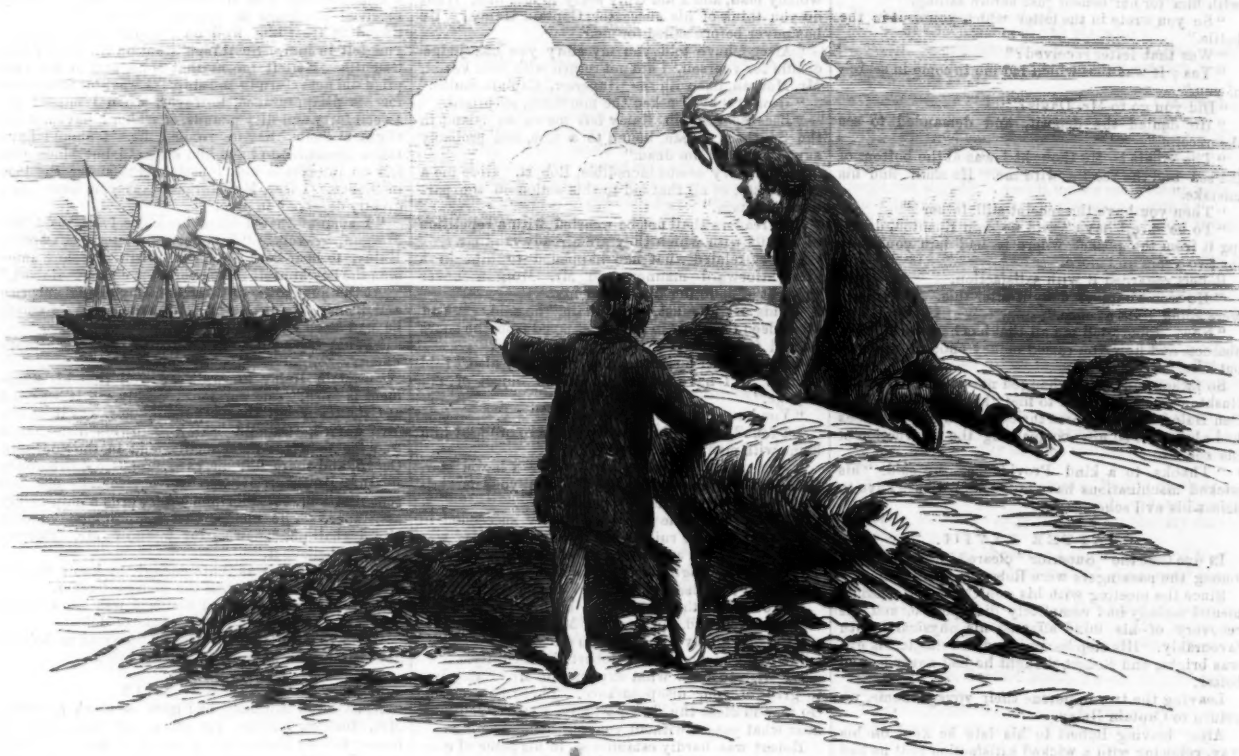
"Thank you!" said Halbert, his selfish nature more nearly affected by gratitude than ever before. "You are very kind. When will you see about it?"

"I am busy. You may go yourself and ask Mr. Paine where he got William's pony, and if he knows of any other equally good."

"That I will," said Halbert, leaving the table in haste.

"Halbert, you have eaten scarcely anything," said his mother.

"I am not hungry," said the excited boy, seizing



[THE SIGNAL.]

his hat and dashing off in the direction of Mr. Paine's office.

"By the way, Mrs. Davis," said her husband, "I think you mentioned last week that the drawing-room needed a new carpet."

"So it does. The old one is looking very shabby."

"Well, you may order a new one."

It was the wife's turn to be astonished, for on broaching the subject a week previous her husband had given her a lecture on extravagance, and absolutely refused to consider her request. This was before the tidings of his good fortune. She was not slow to accept the present concession, and assumed an unusually affectionate manner in the excess of her delight.

Meanwhile Halbert, on opening the front door, came into collision with a boy, taller and stouter than himself, brown and sunburnt. But changed as he was he was not slow in recognizing his old enemy, Robert Rushton.

"What are you back again?" he said, ungraciously.

"So it appears. Is your father at home?"

"Yes; but he is at breakfast. I don't think you can see him."

"I'll make the attempt at any rate," said Robert.

"Where have you been all this time?" asked Halbert, more from curiosity than interest.

"I have been to Calcutta."

"Common sailor, I suppose," said Halbert, contemptuously.

"No, I was a passenger."

"Where did you get your money to pay the passage?"

"I am sorry that I can't stop to gratify your curiosity just at present, for I have important business with your father."

"You are getting mighty important," sneered Halbert.

"Am I?"

"I wouldn't advise you to put on so many airs just because you've been to Calcutta."

"I never thought of putting on any. I see you haven't changed much since I went away. You have the same agreeable, gentlemanly manners."

"Do you mean to say that I am not a gentleman?" blustered Halbert.

"Not at all. You may be one, but you don't show it."

"I have a great mind to put you out of the yard," Robert glanced at Halbert's figure, slight compared with his own, and laughed.

"I think you would find it a difficult undertaking," he said.

Halbert privately came to the same conclusion, and decided to war only with words.

"I have something better to do than to stand here listening to your impudence. I won't soil my fingers by touching you."

"That's a sensible conclusion. Good-morning."

Halbert did not deign to respond, but walked off holding his nose very high in the air. Then as he thought of the pony he quickened his pace and bent his steps to Mr. Paine's office.

"A young man to see you, Mr. Davis," said Bridget, entering the breakfast-room.

"Who is it?"

"I think it's young Robert Rushton, but he's much grown."

"That boy home again!" exclaimed Mr. Davis, in displeased surprise. "Well, you may take him into the next room."

"Good-morning, sir," said Robert as Mr. Davis entered.

"Good-morning. When did you get home?" was the cold reply.

"Last evening."

"Where have you been?"

"To Calcutta."

"On a bootless errand."

"I felt it my duty to search for my father."

"I could have told you beforehand you would not succeed. Did you go as a sailor?"

"No."

"Where did you raise money to pay your expenses?"

"I found friends who helped me."

"It is poor policy for a boy to live on charity."

"I never intend to do it," said Robert, firmly.

"But I would rather do it than live on money that did not belong to me."

"What do you mean by that, sir?" said Mr. Davis, suspiciously.

"It was a general remark," replied Robert.

"May I ask what is your motive in calling upon me?" asked Mr. Davis. "I suppose you have some object?"

"I have, and I think you can guess it."

"I am not good at guessing," said Mr. Davis, haughtily.

"Then I will not put you to that trouble. You remember, before I sailed for Calcutta, I called here and asked you to restore the sum of two thousand pounds deposited with you by my father."

"I remember it, and at the time I stigmatized the claim as a fraudulent one. No such sum was ever deposited with me by your father."

"How can you say that when my father expressly stated it in the letter, written by him in the boat when he was drifting about on the ocean?"

"I have no proof that the letter was genuine, and

even if it were I deny the claim. I am not responsible for money I never received."

"I understand you then to refuse to pay the money?"

"You would have understood it long ago if you had not been uncommonly thick-headed," sneered Mr. Davis. "Let this be the end of it. When you present my note of acknowledgment for the amount I will pay it, and not before."

"That is all I ask," said Robert.

"What?" demanded Mr. Davis.

"I mean that this assurance is all I want. The note shall be presented to you in the course of the day."

"What do you mean?" asked Mr. Davis, startled.

"I mean this, Mr. Davis, that I found my father in Calcutta. He came home with me, and, far from having perished at sea, is now alive and well. He has with him your receipt for two thousand pounds, and will present it in person."

"You are deceiving me!" exclaimed Mr. Davis, in consternation.

"You will soon learn whether I am deceiving you or not," said Robert. "I will now bid you good-morning. My father will call upon you in the course of the day."

He rose to go, leaving Mr. Davis thunderstruck at the intelligence of Captain Rushton's return.

The two thousand pounds with arrest of interest would take more than all the money whose sudden acquisition had so elated him. While he was considering the situation his wife entered.

"I think, dear," she said, "I will go to Bristol to-day to buy the carpeting, if you can spare the money."

"Neither now nor at any other time," he roared, savagely; "the old carpet must do."

"Why then did you tell me fifteen minutes since that I might buy one? What do you mean by such trifling, Mr. Davis?" said his wife, her eyes flashing.

"I mean what I say. I've changed my mind. I can't afford to buy a new carpet."

There was a stormy scene between man and wife which may be passed over in silence. It ended with a fit of hysterics on the part of Mrs. Davis, while her husband put on his hat and walked gloomily over to the factory. Here he soon received a call from Halbert, who informed him, with great elation, that Mr. Paine knew of a desirable pony which could be had on the same terms as his son's.

"I've changed my mind," said his father. "A pony will cost too much money."

All Halbert's entreaties were unavailing, and he finally left his father's presence in a very undiluted frame of mind.

(To be continued.)



[THE MIDNIGHT TERROR.]

ELGIVA; OR, THE GIPSY'S CURSE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"The Snap Link," "Evelyn's Plot," "Sybil's Inheritance," &c., &c.

CHAPTER XVI.

Ah, yet doth beauty like a dial hand
Steal from his figure, and no pace perceived;
So your sweet hue, which methinks still doth
stand,
Hath motion, and mine eye may be deceived;
For as you were when first your eye I saw,
Such seems your beauty still.

JUAN DE CASTRO woke to consciousness with a confused and feverish impression of the events of his long, dreamy insensibility that formed a strange compound of happiness and pain.

Words and deeds, voices and features, flitted before him in a bewildered web—a floating kaleidoscope, which at once dazzled and discouraged his still weakened senses.

Mingled with the sweet words and glances and carresses from those who were dearest to him on earth, that were in themselves alone sufficient to repay a whole life of suffering, there was, however, a feeling of danger, a terror for one dearer to him even in that dreamy unconsciousness than life itself.

But were they real? That was the first question that suggested itself to his weakened intellect, doubtful and suspicious of the freaks which imagination might play with his fevered and feeble brain.

He looked up and around him with languid curiosity as if to correct his impressions.

There was a female figure sitting within sight of his couch, though half shrouded by a heavy curtain that hung over the recess in which she had placed herself.

It was young and slender, there could be no doubt of that. The head was bent in deep thought, the cheek resting on the small hand; one long tress was hanging over the features as if to disguise them from observation, and a mantle that the young man believed was familiar to him enshrouded the shoulders as a veil.

It was a pretty picture, even though the mirrors of the soul, the fair features, were so entirely eclipsed from view, and it was some minutes ere the young man cared to disturb it even by a single question. But some involuntary noise attracted the watcher just as the one word "Lena" trembled on his tongue and well nigh escaped his lips.

The girl rose and came shyly and slowly towards him.

"It is not Lena," she said. "Did you want her? Are you better? Can I bring you anything, dear—friend?"

The last word came with scarcely audible sound on the air. It seemed as if the girl hesitated in the choice of the epithet she should apply, yet felt that the one she selected was either too warm or too cold for the expression of her feelings to the sufferer.

But he scarcely heeded the phrase; his whole soul was expressed in his eyes, and they were riveted on the lovely, blushing face that presented itself at his bedside.

His hand was feebly, gently extended from beneath the coverlet of his couch, and his lips quivered painfully as he strove to form them into some hesitating word which could give vent to the agitating tumult of his soul.

The girl saw it and her heart melted in sympathy with that feeble frame whose powerful emotion shook it to the very centre.

"Juan," she whispered, "do you not know me—Elgiva, whose life you have twice saved at the risk of your own? It does not pain you, does it, to see one who has cost you so much suffering?"

The patient's face beamed with a sudden radiance as she stooped over him till her breath well nigh fanned his hot brow and her lips were almost in contact with his own. Then a sudden chill like a dark cloud passed over his brightness.

"Elgiva," he repeated, sadly. "Elgiva? Then you are the heiress of Arnheim. Alas, alas! and I am a beggar."

There was a bewitching smile on her sweet lips as she looked on his saddening features.

"Juan, we are not equals," she whispered, "because I must ever be your debtor. You have twice saved my life. I cannot repay the debt—never."

He turned half impatiently away.

"No, no, you deceive me, you tantalize me," he said. "Leave me, fair, mocking vision. Why wear that garb, that smile?" he went on, the poor, weak brain evidently suffering under the hopeless agony that excited it beyond control.

She glanced hastily at her scarlet mantle, which she had half-musingly snatched up to hide the evening toilet that did not seem fitting for the sick-room, and at once comprehended his meaning.

"Ah, it is Lena's," she said, gently, throwing off the mantle; "but it is gone now. All disguise is cast away, Juan. It is Elgiva, whose life you saved, who stands before you now, to bless Heaven that you are again in safety."

He gazed on the glittering diamonds that sparkled on her neck with a half-childlike admiration; then he shook his head mournfully.

"How beautiful you are, my Elgiva!" he said, musingly. "Those gems seem meant for your fair, queenly throat. No, no, not my Elgiva," he added, shuddering; "only a bright star that I may worship to scorch me with its brilliant flame. Lady, do not be so cruel," he added, vehemently. "It is not for you to punish one who is but presumptuous in his daring love."

"Juan," she whispered, softly, "can you believe such ill of me? Can you think that I would repay your brave services so ungratefully? Must I speak what would not be maidenly?" she went on, her cheek flushing painfully as she half averted her beautiful face from his gaze. "Must I tell you that I have mourned and watched and prayed for your recovery as only woman watches and prays for those dearest to her? Even Lena did not suffer as I did while you lay in that dreadful stupor, so like death that I dared hardly hope to hear you speak more."

The words poured out in one warm, gentle stream, that came like magic music on the patient's sufferings, such as had power to heal the most rankling wound, to deaden the most acute pain by its charm.

"Dearest, loveliest, most gracious," he murmured. "But you need not fear that such condescension will be repaid by presumptuous boldness. It will be the sole soothing memory of my life to know that such pity, such tears could have been lavished on a poor, humble vagrant, an outcast from the world's pale; and by you, the noble and lovely and good. Lady, may Heaven bless you! The poor Juan will draw his last breath with your name on his lips."

Elgiva's tears were falling fast on the hot brow as he went on. Perhaps the wan, piteous look had even more power than the words of touching humility and fervour to pierce the heart of the girl with love and sympathy.

"Juan, it must not be," she whispered. "You rend my heart with such scornful, needless fancies. I can never forget you, Juan. Will you indeed leave me? Will you break my heart?"

He raised himself on his pillows with sudden and, as it seemed, supernatural strength.

"Lady Elgiva, take care what you do," he exclaimed, in a broken yet almost fierce tone, so heart-felt, so overburdened did the poor, weak voice appear in its mighty agitation. "You might drive me mad if you play with me, if you lead me on to hope where all is black. Speak. What would you have me do or feel or hope, Elgiva, my beautiful idol, my heart's queen?"

"I will tell you, Juan," she said, "if you will calm yourself to listen. I would have you strive with adverse destiny; I would have you hope for the reward of such noble energy; I would have you feel trust and confidence in me through good and evil report. Then we need fear nothing from fate or from any cruel foes."

"We?" he repeated. "We! Would you then grieve if we were parted, my Elgiva?"

"I would grieve if you were unworthy, if you have deceived me in your love and truth, your noble nature, Juan. If that were to fail I could not bear the sorrow. But all else I would glory in suffering for your sake."

He lay as if in a blissful dream.

"Elgiva, it seems as if I were in the same bewildered delirium that I have so long suffered," he said, at last. "Do you know that your image mingled with all I heard and saw? only I had always a horror that you would be taken from me, that you were in some peril from which I strove in vain to save you. And now it is like madness even to dream of any such hopes as you would hold out—you, the heiress of a coronet, and I, a nameless vagrant! Leave me, leave me," he exclaimed, with sudden vehemence: "it will but kill me to awake from the bliss. Better suffer now than be tortured hereafter by such terrible reverse."

"Juan," she said, softly, "were our positions reversed would you desert me then?"

"Would I desert you even in poverty, disgrace, solitude? Never!" he exclaimed, feverishly. "Elgiva, I would give years of my life to think that you and I could be equal, or that you could be raised by me to a higher, nobler position than your own."

"Then you are more proud than loving," she said, with a smile.

"Yes, proud of my sole distinction, proud of my peerless queen," he said, the agony of his fears passing with youthful buoyancy into the delight of that delicious hope. "Oh, Elgiva, it is too much! I feel I am robbing you of your right by this wild love of mine. Yet it is true, dearest Juan, since the hour when I first saw you in your beautiful, unselfish heroism when I first saved your precious life my heart has been yours, though I had no glimpse even of your real rank or the faintest hope of ever beholding you more."

"I could not forget," whispered Elgiva, "though it seemed too wild a fancy even to dream of seeing you more. Juan, is it not a good omen that we have been thus strangely reunited even by your peril? Twice you have saved my life, brave, noble Juan, and now—"

"Now you would endanger his, lady. Is that woman's love and gratitude?" said a sweet, though reproachful voice near them.

Elgiva sprang from her bending attitude to meet the half-reproving gaze of the sharer in her watch, Lena Farina.

"This is scarcely within your province," she said, haughtily, for there was a galling humiliation to her pride in the idea of such an interview being watched and overheard even by her romantic attendant. "If I remember aright, Lena, I told you that I should watch by the patient till the dinner-bell rang, then would summon you to take my place."

"If such were your orders, lady, they have been well obeyed in the letter if not in the spirit," said Lena, calmly. "There will be a question and a search for the lady of the castle ere many minutes have passed. The clang of the bell has not reached this remote apartment, or else," she added, sadly, "the senses were too thoroughly engrossed for you to hear the sound."

"Like Oberon," whispered Juan, utterly disregarding the warning of his adopted sister, "thunder, lightning, destruction are welcome in company with the beloved one."

"But not if it involves the beloved one," said Lena, with a half-scorn in her tone that was foreign to her sweet nature. "Juan, do I know you aright? Is it possible that you can willingly sacrifice this noble lady to your own selfish love? Bid her depart and never see you more. It is the sole return you can make for her great love, the sole proof that you are worthy of her."

It was a bold venture, and the spirits of the two devoted lovers who listened to the daring speaker rebelled angrily against the reproof.

"What right have you to dictate to me, the heiress of this proud domain, the mistress you are hired to serve?" exclaimed Elgiva. "Girl, is it jealousy or frenzy that prompts the madness?"

"Lady Elgiva is right. It is simply insolence," added Juan, bitterly. "Lena, leave me. I have no wish for such selfish, meddling, intrusive affection. From this hour we are strangers to each other. I had a higher confidence in you than to expect such cruelty from one who professed to love me from our childhood. Leave me, I say," he repeated, with an impatient gesture.

"Not till she has gone; not till you are safe and she is beyond suspicion," replied the girl, firmly, though a spasm convulsed her sweet features during the vehement rebuke. "Lady Elgiva, are you mad? Would you have him turned from your father's doors because you are discovered in this chamber? Would you be the talk of your father's menials in their gossiping scandal? For the sake of the future and its possible hopes I implore, I adjure you to leave him to me, his adopted sister, and return to your rightful place in this castle as its mistress."

"His sister? His would-be love. I understand and scorn such deception," said the heiress, jealously.

"Lady Elgiva, you are unjust," replied Lena, calmly. "I have no such business in my heart. Juan De Castro is dear to me, dearer it seems than to you, since I am pleading in vain for his safety; but I would not, I could not feel for him aught but such affection as becomes the children of one parent. Juan, is it not so? Have we not been as brother and sister from our earliest childhood?"

"I suppose—I believe it," he said, faintly; "but all is so strange, so bewildering. I can trust no one save you, Elgiva."

Lena did not speak, though her brow contracted with pain at the taunt. She but laid her hand gently on the arm of the heiress and strove to draw her to the door without resenting the remark.

"Lady, are you mad, or would you kill him?" she whispered. "Neither you nor I could protect him were he discovered, and you—"

Elgiva knew it but too well. The very sweetness of the draught she had quaffed but aggravated the misery and desolation of its relinquishment and her doubts of the sincerity of her who removed it from her eager lips; yet she dared not risk the threatened danger, though she seemed to yield to a mortal's warning.

"Juan, dearest friend, I shall return ere nightfall," she said, turning haughtily from Lena's eyes. "Fear nothing; only be true, and the envy and malice of others will be visited on their own heads. I will never forget, never desert you, Juan—no, not at the cost of fame or liberty or life," she said, repeating as if by a mutual vow the words of her lover as she bent down and lightly pressed her lips on his brow.

The light form had scarcely departed and the door gently closed behind her retreating steps when Lena spoke.

"Juan, this is madness."

"I care not. I distrust, I hate you, Lena," he exclaimed, passionately. "It is you who make the danger, perhaps arrange for the crisis," he added, with a bitter sneer.

The girl gazed on him with more compassion than anger.

"You do not speak from your heart. It is but wild grief and passion that make you so unjust, poor Juan. Heaven knows I feel for you from my very soul; but I prefer your honour, your liberty, your life to your temporary gratification of a frantic attachment, my brother."

Her cool hand pressed his, and her calm, sweet face gazed on him as if it was an angel striving to comfort and guide an erring, suffering mortal. But he turned passionately from her.

"It is false, false," he cried, impetuously. "You are but a snake, poisoning my happiness. Why should you tear her from me, chill her generous impulses, her warm devotion? My own noble love, my unselfish Elgiva!"

"Will you be less noble, less worthy, Juan?" pleaded the girl. "Can you imagine what must be her fate—ay, and yours too—if she were to fulfil her generous vow? Could you accept such sacrifice, Juan? Could you drag her down from her high station, or be pointed at as the gipsy bridegroom who enticed the heiress to a marriage out of gratitude? They would say you exacted the reward, Juan, and, what is worse, she herself would feel the cruelty when the romance had passed away. Juan, dear, best loved brother, am I to weep for the loss of the life I have watched over to save?"

The young man's face was buried in his pillow, and he writhed, yes, absolutely writhed in the bitterness of his struggle.

"Then you would despise, desert me, Lena," he said, at length. "You are so cold, so ignorant of love; no wonder you speak thus hardly of its pangs and pleasures."

A sad smile parted the girl's lips.

"It matters not," she said, "what I think or feel, Juan. Time will prove whether you are just or true in your opinion; but the day will come when you may confess that a sister's love like Lena's may even outweigh the wildest affection. There shall be no danger, no risk, no hardship I will not dare for your sake; only I would endure double such torture to spare your fame, your honour from one stain. Juan, be persuaded. Come with me. Fly the terrible temptation, and leave Elgiva to her own high station."

"And to hard, cruel thoughts of me, Lena," he said. "No, no, I cannot; it is impossible. Do not ask it, Lena. Leave me in peace to take the consequences of my own madness. I grant it may be so. I know it is but a frantic hope, a delusion that may cost me dear. But so be it. I will live and love for to-day, even if it bring my graveclothes on the morrow," he added, sadly.

Then, with a sudden access as it seemed of rage and impatience, he waved Lena from him as she was again about to speak.

"Go, go," he exclaimed. "What right have you to control my actions or my heart? Were it Amice it might be different. She confessed to such love, however hopeless, as entitled her to snatch away any rival from my side. But for you, it is cold, heartless envy, that cannot even comprehend such noble feelings as Elgiva's. Go. It irritates me to hear, to see you even, with that impassive face, and I might say what I would not willingly speak to the companion of my childhood."

Lena stood for a few moments gazing sadly and gently on the excited, feverish face that flashed defiantly at her.

"Juan, I will save you from yourself, if it be in woman's power to do so," she said, quietly, as she left the room, "and if I can succeed it matters little what you think of poor Lena."

Juan's heart smote him. He knew in his inmost soul that there were love and purity and truth in that unselfish nature, and that his own passionate affection for Elgiva had been real strength and nobleness than that generous devotion. But the voice of the lovely Elgiva still sounded in his ears, her beautiful dark eyes seemed to gaze still on him with their passionate tenderness, and the minor but better angel shrank back powerless from the contest.

It needed long and bitter suffering and experience to chasten his soul and teach him the real worth of Lena's pure nature, the noble lessons she would have taught his impetuous spirit; and in after days he could have wept with grief and shame at the injustice he heaped on the true and loyal girl.

CHAPTER XVII.

Even so my sun one early morn did shine
With all triumphant splendour on my brow;
But, ah, alas! he was but one hour mine,
The rain cloud hath mask'd him from me now,
Yet him for this my love no wail disdainseth.

ELGIVA, this would speak with you ere you go to your apartments," said the count, suddenly arresting his daughter's departure as she left the dining-room on the evening when her passionate interview with Juan took place. "Our friends here will pardon my leaving them for a brief space," he added, turning to the prince and Lord Easton, who was still a guest at the castle. "Indeed, I have a most efficient deputy, my lord," he continued, to the marquis, with a glance at Prince Charles, "and I begin to feel the necessity of employing a younger and abler man to perform my duties of hospitality."

There was a proud look on Elgiva's face as she caught Prince Charles's triumphant smile, but she gave no other sign of having heard the words, and as he held open the door for her exit she silently passed before the count with a graceful courtesy that bespoke more self-assertion than submission.

The same expression lingered on her features as she seated herself in her own favourite boudoir after placing a chair for the count, as if to do the honours of her apartments, and her father instinctively felt that it did not bode much good for his success as he opened the subject of the coming interview.

"You can, I should think, imagine the reason I have sought this private conversation, Elgiva. It is not the first time that I have informed you that it is my pleasure and your bounden duty to accept the proposal that Prince Charles has done you the honour to make both to me and to yourself. I only trust you will not force me to take any other mode than the simple expression of my will to enforce your obedience," he added, unsmiling. "It would only be needless pain to allude to the arguments I once before used. My child," he exclaimed, suddenly changing the tone of haughty pomposity in which he had before spoken, "my Elgiva, you will not risk your father's safety, his fame, his happiness, for a girl's caprice?"

It was far more trying to the girl's firmness than the severest censure that her father could have used, but yet a secret doubt of the real truth, a vague suspicion alike of her hated suitor and even of her father's real motives nerved her to resistance.

"Father," she said, calmly. "I would do much at your command, still more for your safety and your happiness, but it can never be your will that your daughter, the heiress of your line, the inheritor of your name and your estates, should degrade herself by perjury—yes, perjury, for I could never speak the marriage vows to a man I hate and despise."

"Hate! despise!" repeated the old noble, with an almost ludicrous attempt at scorn. "Lady Elgiva, you are surely raving, when you speak thus of one of the highest nobles of Germany—one, indeed, of princely, almost of royal rank."

"Were he the emperor of a continent it would not change my judgment of him," exclaimed the girl, vehemently. "Father, it is almost wicked to say that I should fain doubt your words, that I pray you may be deceiving yourself or me in this assertion. But if it is so then he is base and contemptible, even were he a sovereign prince, to use such power for such a purpose. Father, surely you cannot so degrade your child as to sell her to so bad a man."

The count withered under the indignant look and words of the lovely heiress of his name, but he knew but too well the iron nature of the man with whom he had to deal, and he repressed the impulse to yield to the proud indignation of the high-spirited girl.

"It is useless to discuss these points, Elgiva," he said, angrily. "There is but one simple fact, and that is this: Prince Charles of Metz is a man in every respect suitable for you as a bridegroom—equal in rank and fortune and descent to yourself—and he has it in his power to do me most serious, ay, and irretrievable injury. Elgiva, do not be absurd and girlish, as maidens of inferior rank, who bring forward their fancies as reasons for contracting, or refusing the marriages proposed to them. One brief effort to overcome your caprice, one thought of what is due to your station and to myself, should be enough to decide all this needless resistance. Child, you will but share the fate of more exalted maidens in raising your line and carrying its honours to a yet superior house."

The girl was silent for a few moments.

Perhaps she might have even yielded had not Juan's image lingered in her heart, and Juan's vows sounded in her ears. But she had promised troth even to death itself, and she would have suffered tortures rather than break her word to him she loved.

"Father," she said, "let him take our possessions, if they are what he covets. Let him strip our title of its wealth; that will surely content him without the unwilling hand of one whom he does not love, and who does not love—who hates him for his unworthy threats, his cruel contempt, the base tyranny in which he would hold you. Father, let us be true to each other and to ourselves. Better poverty with freedom and honour than wealth with degradation and slavery."

There was an inspiring animation in her look and words—her very attitude expressed the fiery spirit within that would brook no suffering save dishonour.

It was perhaps infectious, for the old count gazed at her with kindling eyes and cheeks that, as she fondly trusted, were blazing with a just resentment or firm resolve.

But the next moment undecieved her.

The features resumed the dull, obstinate resolution that was their habitual expression, and his voice had the old hard element in it as he replied:

"Child, this is all nonsense—girlish romance. Five years hence you will be thankful that I resisted such folly and determined wisely for you and myself. Let us have no more of this useless contention, Elgiva. The matter is decided, and, since you will have the plain truth told you, there is but one more step between me and death should you provoke this haughty, determined man much farther. Yes, death, Elgiva; for I could not survive the publication of the slanders he could establish against me," he added as he marked her sudden recoil.

The girl had somewhat paled at the startling words, but still the very time-serving and cowardly treatment of the old noble shook her faith in the genuine truth of his alarming threat.

"If it is 'slander,' father, it can be disproved, lived down," she said, quietly. "I fear not anything but truth and guilt."

"You are a foolish child who does not in the least comprehend what she says," returned the count, impatiently. "What do you know of the world and its harsh judgment? It is for me to decide, and I tell you I will not be exposed to such danger and disgrace for your folly and selfishness. No, I will not have another word," he exclaimed, waving his hand impatiently, "unless, indeed, it is in submission. Go to your room, girl. I shall inform the prince that my consent to the marriage has been formally announced to you, and that your maidenly shyness has induced you to retire for the night, which will be a sufficient excuse for your non-appearance this evening."

The young heiress twice opened her lips as if to speak—twice they were compressed as if to keep within their closed, firm tension the words that were perhaps scarcely consistent with filial respect.

Then, with a stately inclination of the head, she walked from the apartment and, hastily reached her

Would Lena be awaiting her?

She gazed hastily around. The bedroom and the adjacent dressing-room were empty, and a wayward sense of disappointment at what yet she fully expected and perhaps desired came over her.

The daring little mistress, the high-spirited attendant had not presumed to resume a place in her apartment; but then what would be her influence over Juan?

Would he yield to the force of old associations and the promptings of his own secret judgment and abandon love and ambition and danger for a safer if more ignoble course?

Elgiva threw herself in a large chair, and rocked herself to and fro in the very despair and yet determined resolution of her heart.

"I will not—no, not under any circumstances, give myself to the power of that detested man," she exclaimed, to herself, as the first-shaking passion subsided with calmer resolve. "He loves me not, he would be a very tyrant, visiting on me the mortification he has endured. No, no, even if I never saw Juan more I will never be the bride of Prince Charles, whom I equally fear and hate."

It might be that the words sounded on the silent atmosphere, and re-echoed on the speaker's ear, or that some mocking spirit repeated the ominous cadence.

In any case it returned with a thrilling emphasis on Elgiva's solitude.

"Fear and hate! Fear and hate!" came hissing on the air. "Idiot to associate the two passions. There is one who is too brave for fear, and she shall be taught love for hate."

There was a thrill through the girl's veins as she listened.

It seemed so ghost-like, so supernatural in its tone and its prophecy.

To whom did it refer? Who was the invisible owner of that strange voice?

Elgiva scarcely waited to ask herself these questions ere she sprang up and searched the apartment with its adjoining chamber, but in vain.

No hiding-places could be detected, no half-open door, no lurking closet, where some eavesdropper could be secreted, was discoverable by her sharpened senses, and she returned to her own resting-place with a vague terror for which she could scarcely account over her whole frame.

It was not that she believed in spiritual visitants or would have been alarmed had they appeared to her pure mind. But there were more fearful earthly agents of whom the girl had many a time heard in her half-foreign training.

There was a power which she knew well could be wielded with irresistible and secret force. And however unlikely, however vague the idea, Elgiva could not shake off the apprehension that thus grew on her as she recollected the extraordinarily clear tones of her unseen companion.

But as the terror died away, and the more tangible and alarming realities of her position recurred to her, Elgiva gave herself up to speculations and resolves that should prepare her for all that might befall her, and nerve her for any such ominous fulfilling of the prophecy.

"I must not think any longer or I shall go mad," she exclaimed, ringing the bell with unusual violence. "Where is Mademoiselle Lena?" she asked as a housemaid appeared. "Go and see if she is in her room or in the housekeeper's parlour. Tell her I want her immediately."

The minutes seemed hours ere the girl reappeared with a terrified, purple face.

"There is no trace of mademoiselle," she said, "and, my lady, what is more surprising, I believe she has taken away all that belongs to her. The dresses you gave her, my lady, are in the press, but everything else, down to the very hair combs, are gone. No, my belief is she won't come back, my lady," the girl continued, eagerly, "for there was jealous pique in the household at the stranger's position. And no wonder; it is not in nature that a stranger vagrant, as you may call her, should stay in a Christian household. I expect she's off to the woods again, my lady, and may joy go with her—them's my sentiments."

Probably the philosophical commentary was lost on the heiress.

Lena had gone, and with her one safe nurse to him whom she so fondly loved, or—and the idea flashed with guilty joy over the girl's mind—one obstacle removed to the union which would be her chief aim and happiness in life.

"It can hardly be as you think, Martha," she said, with well-assumed calmness. "Mademoiselle Lena could not be so lost to her duty as to leave my service without due notice and my permission. However, you can do for me what is necessary, and in the morning we shall no doubt hear something of the truant."

There was a dignified reserve in the lady's tone that effectually stayed any farther attempt at discussion on the maid's part, and she at once commenced the duties required of her.

Elgiva's long black hair was duly unbound and arranged, and her evening toilet exchanged for a scarlet *peignoir*—that same wrapper that she had worn to disguise the dazzling brilliancy of her toilet in the sick-chamber.

"You may leave me now, Martha," she said. "I shall read a little before going to rest. Give me that book, light the reading-lamp and go."

Martha had no alternative but to obey, and in a few moments Elgiva was alone.

The book was opened as a matter of form, the pages turned idly over, but their contents formed in print on the brain of the lovely student only one idea—one image possessed her mind, and danced between her and the leaves, like an invoking spirit.

Was she alone? That strange voice still echoed in her ears and thrilled her heart.

But her spirit was brave and her love stronger than death, and at that moment all other terrors were absorbed in that one engrossing horror. But she could not sound the secret agencies that she believed were at work to divide her from him she loved.

"It is useless. I cannot rest till I have seen him. I will not leave him again unguarded," she murmured. "No, not if my own fame were injured for his safety. That power must be mighty indeed that can baffle woman's love and woman's wit."

She opened the door and listened; with a stealthy, cautious step she advanced into the corridor, then, as all appeared still and noiseless, she went more daringly forward till she had once again reached the door of the long picture gallery, which was her safest route to the sick-chamber.

"Safest" so far as discovery went, for no one was likely to haunt the vast solitude at that weird hour, but yet it was a perilous adventure for a young maiden to pass alone through the two ominous rows of dark and speaking faces, all instinct with expression and apparent life.

Elgiva paused for a moment with her hand on the lock, then with a contemptuous smile at her own weakness she opened the door, and closed it behind her, ere she had time for farther hesitation.

Was it the echo of that heavy door that sounded through the dark gallery that was so feebly lighted by her solitary lamp?

She would not indulge the fear that possessed her, but hurried on with a speed that only terror could have inspired till she came opposite the portrait that Lena had pronounced so like to Juan De Castro.

The features seemed instinct with life as she involuntarily paused to consider the singular likeness, and for a moment she could scarcely believe it was but on canvas that those eyes looked on her from that life-size frame.

Suddenly there was as it seemed a wind that rushed like a death chill through the vast space, and waved the portrait to and fro, with terribly vivid imitation of human animation and powers.

There could be no doubt about its reality.

Slowly but unmistakably the figure moved from the still station it had occupied against the panel wall, and by degrees seemed to lower itself almost on a level with the ground, while the white and trembling girl remained spell-bound, gazing on the prodigy.

She felt as if in a frightful dream that held her powerless to move from the thrilling sight, and as she awaited its next movement the same catalepsy threatened to hold her rooted to the spot even should it actually seize her in its ghost-like clasp and drag her with it in its unearthly progress.

But no, there was a pause in the spirit-like motion.

The picture remained wavering as it were in its next purpose, or waiting for the fair descendant on whom it gazed.

Then by slow and imperceptible degrees it began to recede till the very wall appeared to give way behind it, and after some obscure and inexplicable motion it disappeared from view, and where it had once hung was a dark and empty blank.

Elgiva uttered a smothered cry, like one in a frightful nightmare, and, forcing her trembling limbs to action, she dragged them rather than actually walked the remaining length of the apartment, and with a convulsive snatch at the lock opened the heavy door and stood once more within the corridor.

"Juan! Juan!" she cried, gaspingly. "What is it? Art thou lost?—art thou dead?"

The sound of her own voice was unearthly in that dark silence, and she rushed on till she reached the room where Juan's long insensibility had chained him helplessly to the couch so watched and wept over. She laid her hand on the lock, the key had been removed from the inside, and she felt it against her trembling fingers as she turned the handle.

The room was evidently locked from the outside, for the key was needed to gain entrance, and Elgiva hastily turned it, with a cold presentiment of evil that a few moments too well justified.

She entered the dark chamber, where no light but her own illumined the gloom, and, advancing to the bed, flashed her own lamp on the pillows.

No familiar face rested on their support, no beloved form lay on the luxurious couch, and the apartment was one dreary solitude as she half-fraughtly gazed round its ample recesses.

Elgiva gave one long cry, then her over-ried nerves gave way and she sank senseless on the ground.

(To be continued.)

WARNED BY THE PLANETS.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

THE Countess of Mortlake arrived at Strathespy Castle about a week after the earl left The Firs; and as he was yet feeble from the effects of his illness, and the summer was pretty well advanced, it was decided that they should all make a journey across to Ravenswood, an old country house belonging to the countess, and situated away up amid the Scottish hills, in the neighbourhood of Perth.

"I must look after my property," laughed the old dowager, "and see what it's worth. I won't have you two young people squandering it."

Sir Bayard Broughton, who was also back at the castle again, bowed pleasantly, but Lady Pearl shrank away, with a pained look on her face, which was growing very white and thin.

"I haven't visited the old place for ages," continued the countess, "and I suppose it is out of repair; but the breeze up there is fine, and Lady Marguerite looks feeble as well as her father. So let's get ready, and start at once. What do you say, Lady Neville?"

Lady Neville made no objection whatever—she never did to any project suggested by the dowager; and the gentlemen favoured the visit, as the shooting at Ravenswood was celebrated.

The point being settled, Lady Neville went to give some directions in regard to preparations, and the countess and Lady Marguerite repaired to a little boudoir, where the latter always spent her leisure hours.

"I suppose you're all going to the ball at Dalewood to-night?" said the dowager, seating herself comfortably in a great velvet chair, and drawing out her gold snuff-box.

"Why, yes, of course," responded Pearl. "The young Lord of Dalewood comes of age to-day, and the ball is to be in honour of the occasion. 'Tis dreadfully warm, but as Sir Ralph is one of papa's best friends I suppose we shall have to go."

"Oh, well," said the countess, who, despite her age and wrinkles, was still passionately devoted to gaiety, "the dancing will be on the green, and it will be pleasant enough no doubt. What shall you wear, Marguerite?"

"My white tulle, I think," she said, "with natural flowers."

"You won't do any such thing! The white tulle will do with blue silk, and I've brought you some rare old lace—and you shall wear your diamonds. Why not be brilliant, a girl with your beauty and prospects? What makes you so dull, Marguerite?"

"I think I'm not quite well," faltered Pearl, averting her face, while her eyes filled with tears.

"Ah, it is the heat, and this vile Northumberland atmosphere," continued the countess, tapping her snuff-box; "I always did detest Northumberland! But the Scottish breeze will brace you up—you won't know yourself when you've been at Ravenswood a week. And, Pearl, when are we to have the wedding?"

The poor little girl started as if a bullet had struck her.

"Come now," cried the dowager, eyeing her sharply over her spectacles, "what's the matter? You're the richest woman I know, and you'll have as handsome a man for your husband as there is in England! Why not marry at once? I never did fancy delays in anything. Lady Neville," she continued, as that stately matron entered, "I was just suggesting to Pearl here that we have the wedding at once. What do you say?"

Lady Neville glanced at her niece, but Pearl kept her face averted.

"Marguerite is young," she said, "but as the marriage involves no separation I think it would be quite as well to have it over—I don't like long engagements."

"Nor I," rejoined the countess. "Let's see. Of course Strathespy will want her married here; he would think the marriage illegal if it took place anywhere else."

Lady Neville nodded smilingly.

"Well," continued the countess, "we shall want her married before we return to London. 'Twill be better for her to enter upon the next season as a bride—much better. Say, then, we spend July and August at Ravenswood, and come down here and have the wedding about the first of November, and get back to London for the Christmas festivities. Will that do?"

"I think so," Lady Neville replied, "if we can make our arrangements."

"Of course we can. There won't be so much to do—Marguerite's *trousseau* I shall order from Paris—and Strathespy will have to fit up a little here. We'll have a grand wedding, and give the ton a feast. Then Broughton and Marguerite can go to Rome for the winter, and we can repair to London. Speak to Strathespy, Lady Neville, and let him arrange it."

Marguerite stood like a statue, her white face averted, her blue eyes staring into vacancy, her slender hands locked.

"I wonder if it is necessary to have any of the jewels re-set?" remarked the dowager, striking the ground with her jewelled cane, and taking supreme delight in all the details of preparation. "Marguerite, bring the jewel case here, and let me look at them—you'll wear the diamonds to-night."

"The case is in the iron safe," said Lady Neville; "it has not been removed since Lord Strathespy was ill at The Firs. Here is the key, Marguerite; you had better fetch it yourself. Your father never sends servants to the safe."

Marguerite took the key, and left the room with a white, set face and wide, blue eyes.

"Lady Neville," nodded the dowager, the moment she had gone, "we're going to have trouble with that child. If we don't get this marriage over soon 'twill never take place at all."

"Marguerite is so obedient, and has been so carefully trained," suggested her ladyship.

"No matter, we shall have trouble, I see it in her eyes! Mark my words and let's get the affair over as soon as possible. If she do not marry Broughton she will not get my fortune!"

The entrance of Lady Marguerite barred farther discussion on the subject.

She brought the jewel case and placed it before the countess. She unlocked it and threw open the lid.

"These diamonds are so rare," she began.

Then she paused suddenly, and the next instant a cry of horror broke from her lips—a cry that fairly curdled the blood in Lady Neville's veins.

"Heavens!" she ejaculated, "the diamonds are gone!"

Lady Neville started in amazement, so did Marguerite.

There lay the handsome settings, but every precious stone had been removed.

The old woman grew livid in her fury.

"Who has done this?" she cried, jerking her cane from side to side, "answer me, Lady Neville!"

Lady Neville drew herself up haughtily.

"How should I know?" she said; "am I answerable for the work of a burglar?"

"Marguerite, ring for your father."

Marguerite obeyed in silence, but with a look of positive relief in her eyes.

The earl came, and stood in wordless amaze. Then he went to the safe and examined it. Nothing else had been touched. All the Strathespy valuables, plate, and jewels, and ornaments of value, that went, according to the entail, from one heir to another, were safe and untouched, only Marguerite's diamonds, the diamonds given her by the Countess of Mortlake, were gone.

"They were worth a fortune," bewailed the dowager; "the queen on her throne hadn't better diamonds than mine."

Lord Strathespy and Lady Neville looked at each other in pallid consternation.

"It is his work," gasped the earl, with white lips, "I'm sure of it—and I'll disown him for it, by Heaven, I will!"

CHAPTER XL.

THE earl strode straight from Marguerite's boudoir to the office of his head steward, and from him he learned in detail all that had transpired during his illness at The Firs.

"It pains me to say a word against the young master," said the old man; "but the truth must be told, and the way he carried on was shameful, especially while your lordship lay at the point of death. He had some score or more of wild young blades from London, and every blessed night that came it was carousing and drinking and gambling till the break of day. I've been at Strathespy Castle many a year, and never saw the like before."

The earl had heard enough. He turned away,

white to the lips in his anger and mortification, and went at once to his son's apartments. The door of his sitting-room was locked, but the irate peer burst it in with a single effort.

A very luxurious person in his tastes and habits was the young Lord of Strathespy. His rooms were littered with costly trifles of every form and design. A miser at heart was the young heir, yet a very Sybarite in regard to his own personal indulgence.

Lord Strathespy tore through these dainty apartments like a madman, overturning jewelled card-cases and golden perfume-flasks, and enamelled tobacco-boxes, all costly and pretty enough for the use of a prince. At last he came to what he searched for—an iron box, which was carefully locked.

The earl caught it up, and hurried away with it to the library, where a few strokes with a chisel sent the lid flying in half a dozen directions. Then he tumbled over its contents with a dangerous look in his eyes—there were cards, letters, a pretty good-sized roll of Bank of England notes, and, at the very bottom, a handful of guineas and two or three unset diamonds.

"I knew it!" cried the earl. "I was sure it was his work! The meanest tramp in the lanes would scorn such an act! I'll disinherit him for it!"

Leaving the costly contents of the cash-box scattered about promiscuously, he went in search of his son. But he was nowhere in the house, and, half mad in his anger and impatience, the earl strode out into the park and down the winding carriage drive with fierce, impatient steps.

On and on he went, his soul filled with bitter thoughts, all his proud blood at fever heat.

Wild extravagance and dissipation were bad enough, but this last act was meanness itself.

On the very confines of the park, at the edge of a strip of thick timber, he came face to face with Lord Angus, his gun across his shoulders and a brace of birds in his belt.

"Well, sir!" said Lord Strathespy, confronting him with a face that was white with anger.

The young peer may have been startled, but he did not betray it. He brought his gun down with a clang and faced his angry father with bold, impudent eyes.

"Well, sir," he repeated; "what is it?"

For an instant the earl struggled for his voice. His rage choked him. He was an excitable man, with passions and impulses beyond his control.

"Can you ask, sir?" he cried, at last, his voice hoarse and unsteady. "Dare you stand there and face me, you impudent young scoundrel, after what you have done?"

The young man saw at a glance that denial was out of the question, and braced himself to meet the storm.

"What have I done?" he asked. "What the deuce is all this row about?"

"What have you done?" stormed the angry father. "You ungrateful ruffian, I'm ashamed to name your offences! You have stolen your sister's jewels—purloined them from the settings like a common thief! How dared you open my safe, sir?"

"I wanted money," replied the young man, boldly.

"Why didn't you double my allowance when I asked you? I may as well have it," he added, with a bitter sneer, "as for you to squander it on such a woman as Lady Drummond."

The earl stood silent for an instant, utterly stunned by his son's audacity.

Then he strode forward, and, grasping his collar, shook him till he was out of breath.

"Such insolence—and to me!" he panted. "You unnatural young villain, I've half a mind to wear out my cane over your shoulders!"

The young man's sallow cheeks flushed to a dark crimson, and his head protruded forward, giving his greenish gray eyes that peculiar, serpent-like look they always wore when he was angered.

"It takes two to play at that game," he replied, speaking under his breath; "and I am stronger than you are! Strike me a blow if you dare, Earl of Strathespy, and I'll murder you!"

The earl recoiled back as if an adder had stung him.

"Merciful Heaven!" he cried, putting his hands to his head in a blind kind of way as if his reason were deserting him, "is he my son?"

"Your son," hissed the young man, almost in his ear; "and Earl of Strathespy as soon as you are out of the way, and the sooner the better."

"We shall see about that," stormed Lord Strathespy, roused again into a frenzy of anger. "As I told you once before, there is a proviso affixed to the Strathespy entail, and I will take advantage of that stipulation. The earls of Strathespy Castle have been gentlemen for upwards of a couple of centuries, and I will not leave a common thief to inherit the old name. Boy, I could have forgiven dissipation and extravagance—even if you had stolen the Strathespy jewels I might have been brought to overlook it;

but," he went on, an ominous calm in his voice and face, "you left the valuables you thought would be yours one day, and stole your sister's jewels—your sister's bridal diamonds, given to her by the Countess of Mortlake. The vilest burglar in existence would have scorned to commit such an act. I am ashamed of you. You have disgraced me and the noble name I bear, and from this hour I disown and disinheret you. You are no son of mine, and I wish to Heaven I could have the Strathpey birthmark erased from your arm and thief and coward branded in its place."

For the first time the young man winced, and put his hand to his arm unconsciously.

The earl did not know it, but his son did, and it vexed him and made him feel uneasy—every day he lived the scarlet cross grew paler.

"I shall arrange the matter at once," continued Lord Strathpey—"the title and estates shall go to my nearest relative, and you, sir, may go where you please, provided you never cross my path again."

"I shall cross it once," hissed the young man, protruding his head till his hot breath swept his father's face, "and then I'll murder you!"

And in the same breath, an awful, unearthly voice made answer:

"Born to be hung. Man cannot fight with Fate!"

The earl grew deadly faint, and the oaks and fir spun round like gigantic human figures, but he did not lose his senses. The face of his son, with that deadly purpose in his eyes, acted like a stimulant. He gasped for a moment, tore frantically at his collar, and then went staggering on in the direction of the castle.

Colonel Gilbert Vernon, riding across from the "Cedars," where he was on a visit with his wife, met the miserable nobleman face to face, for the first time since their ominous parting that afternoon in the valley of the Tyrol.

The face of Lord Strathpey was like the face of a dead man, and he reeled from side to side in his vain attempts to walk.

The colonel was out of his saddle in a twinkling, and at his side.

"I beg your pardon, Lord Strathpey, but if you'll allow me—" he began.

But Lord Strathpey, recognizing the voice and the cool, calm face, struck out with both hands like an angry child.

"How dare you speak to me?" he cried. "Get out of my path, or I'll—"

But the threat ended in a gasp, and the earl fell heavily to the ground, prostrated by one of his old attacks.

Colonel Vernon sprang back to his saddle, and shot off toward the castle like an arrow, and in ten minutes the earl's servants were round him.

"Poor fellow," sighed Colonel Vernon as he rode away; "it is coming home to him!"

Meanwhile the disinherited young lord stood leaning on his gun in the edge of the oak timber.

"Who spoke those strange words, I should like to know?" he said, gazing about him with a bewildered stare.

As if in response to his wish, a graceful figure glided out from beneath the heavy oak boughs, the figure of Lady Cecilia Drummond.

"Good-morning, my lord," she began, extending her white hand; "what makes you wear such a scowling face this fine day?"

"Because I'm in a scowling humour," he replied, roughly; "good-day, Lady Drummond!"

He was striding off, but the firm clasp of her white hand detained him.

"Lord Angus," she said, meeting his sullen eyes with her flashing glance, "I chanced to be sitting on the oak-roots yonder, and I have heard all that passed between you and your father. Will you allow me to say that I think you are a very ill-used young man?"

"Perhaps I may be, but you are one of my father's good friends," sneered the young man, "and—"

"I am not one of your father's friends," she interrupted, her eyes blazing with lurid fire, "I am his deadly enemy."

Lord Angus stared in wonder.

"Years ago," she went on, her firm clasp still on his arm, "before you were born, the Earl of Strathpey insulted me—did me a wrong I shall never forgive. Young man, I am your friend; will you let me help you, and thus avenge my own wrongs?"

He eyed her sharply for a moment or two, as if to read her purpose, and then he answered, warily:

"I don't know that I object to your help, Lady Drummond, but I think it the best plan for every man to weed his own row. What I want done I can do!"

"Can you?" rang her silvery voice; "Lord Angus, no man is so strong as never to need a helping hand!"

Lend me your ear for one moment, please; I've a secret to tell you."

She bent her red lips to his cheek, and whispered something in his ear.

He started as if struck by a bullet, and put his hand upon his arm, in the spot where he was marked by the scarlet cross.

She noticed the action, and broke into a silvery laugh.

"It is true, my lord," she said; "and I can prove it at any moment."

His eyes began to blaze with defiant rage.

"Come," she continued; "none of that, my lord! We are to be friends and allies, not enemies. I am here to serve you and help you. Shall I, my lord?"

She extended her hand once more, and this time the young man clasped it.

"Yes," he replied, "we'll be friends!"

"Good and true friends," smiled her ladyship; "a fellow feeling makes one wondrous kind, Lord Angus, and we'll yet outwit the earl. Come to The Firs to-morrow, I shall have need of you."

And without a word of warning she vanished as she had appeared, with the noiseless motion of a spirit.

The young heir of Strathpey Castle stood for full five minutes in sombre thought, and then, shouldering his gun, he walked moodily homeward.

(To be continued.)

FIGHTING WITH FATE.

CHAPTER XXVII.

LORD WALDEMAR proceeded from Lady Thaxter's residence to his own, which was not far distant, both being in Park Lane, in a strangely thoughtful mood. His hall porter removed his lordship's great-coat and took possession also of his walking-stick, hat and gloves, and the baron went into his drawing-room.

Miss Floyd, in a Parisian dress and glittering with jewellery, was seated near one of the windows, idly turning over the pages of a fashion journal.

Mrs. Watchley was cozily placed near the fire, and was busy with the construction of a very gay bouquet upon canvas with Berlin wools.

"Come in, grandpapa," cried Miss Floyd, with some excitement and eagerness. "It's horridly dull here. Have you called upon the Marchioness of Roxburgh?"

"The Marchioness is ill, Hilda," replied his lordship, with a singular sense of repulsion as he looked upon the fair, deceitful face of his acknowledged grand-daughter and remembered the pure, frank and truthful countenance of Honor Glint, which haunted him like the memory of his dead son.

"She has a serious attack of rheumatism, and must go to Nice for her health as soon as she can bear the journey. She cannot introduce you this season."

Miss Floyd uttered an exclamation of impatience, annoyance and anger.

"It is too bad!" she exclaimed, with tears of vexation. "The horrid old thing! Her illness seems very convenient, especially as you desired me not to enter society this winter. I daresay it's all a contrived plan between you two to frustrate my wishes."

"Hilda!"

Lord Waldemar's stern voice rang through the room, and his stern face grew sterner still in its haughty anger and surprise.

"Hilda!" cried Mrs. Watchley, trembling with terror. "Oh, don't, my dear! You must not speak in that way to his lordship. Don't let your temper make you insolent to your dear grandpapa."

Miss Floyd among all her lessons and amid all the careful training and tutelage she had received had never learned to control her temper when smarting under a sense of disappointment. She feared Lord Waldemar, whose rebuke of her insolence had startled her, and she turned upon her companion, saying, harshly:

"You forget your place, Mrs. Watchley. Do you dare tell me what I should do? If it were not for grandpapa I should discharge you, or at least compel you to take your place among the upper servants. As it is, you will be more guarded in addressing me, or you will find that your situation is precarious."

Mrs. Watchley, in an agony of fear lest this betrayal of Miss Floyd's character should disgust the baron, vainly tried to check the young lady. Failing utterly, she burst into tears.

Lord Waldemar, well as he had read Miss Floyd, was astonished at this scene. An angry light leaped from his amazed eyes, and there came upon his stern, bronzed face an expression before which even Hilda Floyd quailed.

"Hilda!" he exclaimed, "I am astonished. I knew you were deceitful and time-serving, but I did not believe you were so utterly cruel and heartless."

Mrs. Watchley, who had hurried along the hall toward his private room, but, remembering that he had not mentioned Lady Thaxter to Miss Floyd, had smothered his anger, and turned back to repair the omission. It happened that as he paused at the drawing-room door, his hand upon the knob, Miss Floyd was beginning her reply to Mrs. Watchley. Spellbound, he had listened to the entire speech. When she had finished he moved away and hurried to his library.

"And that serpent is the daughter of my son Wallace, as frank and true a boy as ever lived!"

Mrs. Watchley, whom you have treated as a disobedient servant, is a lady born and bred. She took you from your mother's dying arms into her own. When you had no relative in all the world to defend and protect you, for I did not know of your existence, she cherished and nurtured and loved you. She educated you as a lady. I only fear that in her idolatry of you she has spoiled you. And it is thus you repay her! I blush for you. Know, Miss Floyd, that Mrs. Watchley is not your servant, but your companion, and that you cannot discharge her or send her away. I desire to arouse in your heart some spark of affection for and gratitude to her. I expect you to apologize to her."

"I'll never do that!" cried Miss Floyd, flinging back her head. "Mrs. Watchley has been used to just such treatment from me all my life, and I'll never humble myself to apologize to her. As to her goodness to me, haven't you paid her for it? She has had principal and interest for every penny she ever expended upon me. I never cared for her affection. She's too far beneath me to cause her affection to be of any value to me. She gave me a home, but she has got a better one. I don't fancy that her kindness to me was by any means so disinterested as you seem to think, grandpapa. She seems to have made it pay pretty well."

Lord Waldemar's face flushed.

"Hilda!" he exclaimed, "I am ashamed of you! If you will not apologize for yourself I will apologize for you. Mrs. Watchley, you know this wayward girl far better than I do, and you have perhaps learned to bear with her. I beg you to overlook her conduct on this occasion. I am persuaded that she does not mean all she says."

The young lady's lip curled. In her unreasoning state of anger she lost sight of prudence and self-interest even.

"I do mean what I say," she said, frowning. "Permit me to utter my real sentiments, and let me have the credit of them, grandpapa. I don't care how soon you know it. I don't like Mrs. Watchley, and I won't have her spying on me and saying 'Don't, dear, eternally. I'm tired of her, and if I ever get into power I'll give her just one hour in which to get out of my house.'"

"Oh, Hilda, Hilda!" cried Mrs. Watchley, in an increasing and unbearable agony. "I implore you to say no more. You are injuring yourself. Control your tongue, I beseech you. I would rather go away than to hear you talk like this."

Lord Waldemar had entertained the opinion that his acknowledged grand-daughter was well bred. That belief was now seen to be a mere fallacy, for Miss Floyd turned her back abruptly upon her pleading companion, and, thumping her dainty fingers upon a Venetian mosaic table, began to hum in the most insolent manner a bar from a popular opera.

Lord Waldemar was silent and motionless for one moment from sheer amazement. Then he rose up, towering far above Miss Floyd, and raining down upon her the angry flashes from his eyes.

"This is the first low-bred and vulgar-souled Floyd I ever looked upon," he said, slowly. "I begin to think, Mrs. Watchley, that it is a serious pity that you did not suffer this descendant of the Arlyns to die in her childhood. Strange that all your years of care should have resulted in the shaping of a creature like this."

With a sneering smile at the young lady, he turned and left the room.

"Oh, Hilda!" burst forth Mrs. Watchley, when she found herself alone with her charge. "Why will you not control your temper? You ought to have been gentle and affectionate to Lord Waldemar, and have won his love. I fear you have ruined yourself—"

"Do stop!" exclaimed Miss Floyd. "It's croak, croak, continually. You ought not to provoke me as you do. If I am ruined, it's all your fault. But I'm not ruined. Grandpapa can't set me adrift as he did papa, because I'm a girl, and have no one else to take care of me. He can't alter the fact that I must inevitably succeed him. I do hope he won't keep me waiting very long. He's sixty-eight years old now, and he ought not to live many years longer, although he is so hale and vigorous that I sometimes fear he'll live to be a hundred. When he dies, and I become my own mistress, then, ah, then I shall be happy! In the meantime, whether he likes me or not, he'll have to provide for me as his heiress. I like his money, although I hate him."

Lord Waldemar had hurried along the hall toward his private room, but, remembering that he had not mentioned Lady Thaxter to Miss Floyd, had smothered his anger, and turned back to repair the omission. It happened that as he paused at the drawing-room door, his hand upon the knob, Miss Floyd was beginning her reply to Mrs. Watchley. Spellbound, he had listened to the entire speech. When she had finished he moved away and hurried to his library.

"And that serpent is the daughter of my son Wallace, as frank and true a boy as ever lived!"

he said, in his bitterness. "And she must succeed me in the Waldemar title and estates! Why, she is worse even than Darrel Moor. I have made a poor exchange. She is all Arlyn. Oh, why could I not have found a grand-daughter like this young Honor Glint, with her brilliant black eyes, so like my son's, and her sunny face? She has soul. How her gaze seemed to go to my very heart. If I had seen the two girls together, and been asked to choose my grand-daughter between them, I should have chosen Miss Glint. Her resemblance to Wallace is something marvellous. She looks like my boy, only refined, made delicate, and spiritualised. The resemblance is inexplicable. It seems as if it must be more than a mere coincidence. If Miss Glint were not the known daughter of a Lancashire gentleman—if there were any possibility that Grimrod could have made a mistake—Ah! what nonsense! Grimrod sifted every iota of the evidence, and there is the child's nurse, Mrs. Watchley herself, to give weight to the testimony. But what might have been!"

He remained in his library until time to dress for dinner—a custom to which he had scrupulously adhered all his life, and which he never omitted except in illness. At seven o'clock he came down to the dining-room.

Miss Floyd was already in the room, and alone. She was standing before the fire, but came forward at his lordship's entrance and made a very prettily worded apology for her rudeness of some hours previous.

The baron inclined his head, accepting the apology, but when she would have bestowed a Judas kiss upon him he upraised his noble face beyond her reach, and declined the proffered caress.

"Don't trouble yourself to do that, Hilda," he said, coldly. "I'm not fond of kisses. We will confine our intercourse to the 'yes, yes' and 'nay, nay' description."

"Just as you please, grandpapa," said the young hypocrite, with a mournful voice. "You are all I have in the world to love, and if you repulse me I've no one to turn to. I know I'm wilful and cross and full of tempers, but I'll try to be better. My heart is all right, grandpapa. If you would only be patient with me, as dear Mrs. Watchley is."

"I daresay," said Lord Waldemar, dryly, and rather irrelevantly. "But I'm not a patient man, Hilda. I have an old-fashioned weakness for honour, truth, sincerity and goodness. I like a woman to be thoroughly good and sweet and kindly, not merely on the surface."

"I suppose grandmamma was an angel," remarked Miss Floyd, a little spitefully.

The old lord bent his head reverently at the utterance of that name, and his proud lips quivered under his frost-white moustache. In all the years that had come and gone since he had laid his young wife in her tomb he had cherished her memory as something sacred and holy.

Even though he had said to himself that he should like to marry the Hungarian Countess of Rothemere, the memory of his dead wife, who had died young and would always be young to him, had not been dethroned. Even should he take another wife to cheer his latter days and to soothe his loneliness, the mother of his dead boy would never be forgotten. Since her death until this day he had never dreamed of a second marriage as possible.

"You are right, Hilda," he said. "My dear wife was an angel. She had all those old-fashioned virtues I have mentioned. But, Hilda, I would rather not hear her name on your lips."

The angry answer that sprang to Miss Floyd's tongue was arrested by the appearance of Mrs. Watchley.

The butler and his staff also appeared.

The baron seated his grand-daughter's companion at the table with habitual courtesy, and took his place.

Miss Floyd also seated herself, and the stately dinner, more formal here than at Floyd Manor, progressed slowly.

After the meal the ladies went up to the drawing-room, Lord Waldemar lingering alone over his wine.

His lordship came up presently, but he did not seat himself.

"I am going out," he said, standing before the fire. "I must visit Westminster this evening. Before I go it is proper for me to tell you, Hilda, my decision in regard to your future. You are not to enter general society this winter. Any young lady who could display such innate vulgarity, ill-temper, and low-breeding, as you have exhibited to-day would only disgrace her unfortunate relatives. My late wife's kinswoman, Lady Thaxter, will, however, call upon you to-morrow, and will escort you to flower shows, the Zoological Gardens, Sydenham, and elsewhere, and will kindly introduce you to a pleasant circle of young people. You shall have a full corps of masters in all the accomplishments. I

cannot take time to engage them for you, and Mrs. Watchley cannot take the trouble. I shall have Grimrod attend to it. Lady Thaxter will invite us to dine with her *en famille* some day within a week. She has some delightful guests, whose manners you will do well to imitate."

"So I am to be a mere school-girl?" pouted Miss Floyd.

"We will not discuss the matter, Hilda. My decision is irrevocable; therefore make the best of it. You will receive Lady Thaxter with all honour. She is my best friend, and was very fond of my poor wife. Another year will be soon enough for you to launch yourself upon society, Hilda."

His lordship, without waiting to argue the question, departed from the room and soon after from the house.

The next morning Lady Thaxter, in elegant carriage costume, and alone, called upon Miss Floyd.

Lord Waldemar was present, introducing his acknowledged grand-daughter to his late wife's kinswoman, who was also his treasured and honoured friend.

"I am your cousin, my dear," said Lady Thaxter, delighting in the pearly complexion and unmistakable prettiness of Miss Floyd, yet wishing that the young girl were endowed with a positive beauty like that of Honor Glint—"that is, a cousin a second time removed. I am your relation on your grandmamma's side, as Lord Waldemar may have explained to you. I cannot trace in your face any resemblance to the Floyd family or to that of your grandmother," she added, wistfully. "Resemblances are capricious things, it seems. I have a young friend who is staying with me who is an ideal copy of your father as I knew him in his boyish days."

Mrs. Watchley started. Lord Waldemar's attention was called to her by her sudden agitation, and he hastened to present Mrs. Watchley to Lady Thaxter, uttering a neat and effective little speech, in which he did full justice to all the imaginary qualities with which he had endowed his grand-daughter's companion.

"Does Miss Floyd resemble her mother, Mrs. Watchley?" inquired Lady Thaxter, after a little while, when the conversation which herself had inaugurated began to flag.

"Yes, my lady—that is, no, my lady," said Mrs. Watchley, confusedly, apparently having been taken off her guard. "She looks to me very much like her papa. Mr. Floyd was very fair, and his hair was light."

"But his hair had a tint of pale gold, and his eyes were black," replied Lady Thaxter. "His looks come back to me with startling vividness since my young friend came to me. She might have been Wallace Floyd's daughter, and one would have declared that her paternity was stamped upon her face."

Mrs. Watchley's countenance was of a sickly pallor at this moment. She held up a small hand screen before her, hiding it.

"I must venture to express an opinion different from Mrs. Watchley's," said the baron. "Seeing so little of the looks and nature of the Floyd in Hilda, I am compelled to think her all Arlyn."

An unmistakable *soowl* appeared on Miss Floyd's face.

Lady Thaxter set her down in her own mind as unamiable, but redoubled her kindness to her, under the impression that the girl was extremely sensitive, and felt wounded by her grandfather's unflattering tone.

"I have some friends visiting me, Miss Floyd," she said—"a Hungarian countess, who is very beautiful and fascinating; a young lady of your own age, Miss Honor Glint, whom you are sure to like, from her singular resemblance to your own father; and finally my nephew, Sir Hugh Tregaron, who is greatly attached to Lord Waldemar and is highly esteemed by his lordship. You are young to enter society, but you can at least make the acquaintance of some young people whom I shall be glad to introduce to you. We are kinswomen, my dear, and should be friends. We will not let ceremony and formality stand between us. I desire you to look upon me as your intimate and dear friend. All this is a preamble to an invitation to you, Hilda, to dine with me to-morrow, informally. It is merely a family dinner, but I beg you, my lord, and you also, Mrs. Watchley, to lend us your presence. There will be no one else present except my permanent guests."

Lord Waldemar, Hilda, and Mrs. Watchley accepted the invitation.

"I have dropped in too often uninvited at your charming family dinners to stand upon ceremony with you, Lady Thaxter," said the baron, smiling.

"Your house is a second home to me always. I am sure Hilda will also feel at home there."

Lady Thaxter having to make another call, Lord Waldemar conducted her to her carriage.

"And that is Wallace Floyd's daughter!" murmured her ladyship as she rode away. "I could

never have suspected the fact. She's not at all like Wallace. The baron must be right. She's all Arlyn. Somehow I don't like her. She gives the impression of being false, deceitful, and even wicked. I am glad Darrel Moor is not in town. I could not have invited him to my house with Hugh and Honor there."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

UPON the evening of the day subsequent to that in which Lady Thaxter's visit to Hilda Floyd had occurred Honor Glint and Sir Hugh Tregaron, with their genial hostess, were gathered in Lady Thaxter's drawing-room, awaiting the arrival of their expected guests.

They were all in full dress, although the occasion was only what Lady Thaxter had termed simply a "family dinner." The hostess appeared to advantage in a heavy and long black silk gown, ruffled and profusely trimmed with black and white lace. Her ornaments were exquisitely carved sardonys cameos.

Honor wore a pale green silk, heavy and lustrous, which contrasted with the purity of her complexion and the yellow gold of her hair. Her only ornaments were a pair of pale emeralds, simply set, one being worn attached to each tiny shell-like ear. Her black eyes were as brilliant as stars, and her witching beauty was as vivid and piquant as if she had never known the shadow of a trouble. Sir Hugh's grave eyes dwelt upon her loveliness with an intense admiration, which he vainly tried to conceal.

"I hope the countess will be able to join us at dinner," said Lady Thaxter, anxiously. "She has not been well for a day or two. The change of climate has, I think, not been beneficial to her. As to Mrs. Early, she will hardly be back to-day from Tooting, where she has been for a couple of days past. Ah," she added, in a breath of relief, "here is the countess now."

The tapping of little boot heels was heard upon the marble floor of the hall, the drawing-room door opened, and the Hungarian countess made her appearance.

She was a little pale, but was looking superb. Her gray hair was arranged in graceful, airy waves that rose lightly above her pure, broad forehead. There was a restless glitter in her radiant blue eyes, but her lovely face seemed more than ever youthful and charming.

She was dressed in a robe of pale violet velvet, with square-cut corsage, her bare and milk-white neck being partially shaded with frills of rare point lace.

She wore a *rosette* of diamonds around her neck, and a superb locket, set with an immense liquid brilliant, glowed and sparkled and coruscated upon her bosom. There were diamonds pendent from her ears and clasped about her arms, and even studing the clasp of her belt.

Lady Thaxter arose at the entrance of her honoured guest, and the two ladies took their seats near each other.

The hostess inquired affectionately in regard to the health of the countess, indulged in some remarks highly condemnatory of the English climate, and finally said:

"I believe I did not tell you, Lady Rothemere, that Lord Waldemar will be accompanied here to-day by his young grand-daughter, Miss Floyd, whom I saw yesterday at his house."

The Hungarian countess bent forward, eager and intent, a strangely startled look in her blue eyes.

"You did not mention, Lady Thaxter," she said, in a tremulous voice, "that you called at Lord Waldemar's house yesterday. Ah, I remember you made some other calls, and there was our drive in the park and visitors in the evening. And to-day I have been confined to my room with headache. We have had no time, in fact, to discuss Lord Waldemar and his family."

The countess spoke with a haste that might be termed feverish.

"As you say, Lady Rothemere," said her hostess, observing nothing remarkable in the manner of her guest, "we have had no time to discuss the Waldemar family. Miss Floyd, whose history is singularly romantic, is coming here with her grandfather to-day."

"Coming here!" breathed the Hungarian countess, in a panting voice.

"Yes; I am her kinswoman. Lord Waldemar has always been at home in my house, and I have spent months at Floyd Manor and at Waldemar. I expect that Miss Floyd will spend much time here."

Lady Rothemere's fingers fluttered over the carved pearl sticks of her velvet silk fan in a nerveless fashion.

"You saw this young lady, my friend?" she said, trying to speak calmly. "Does she resemble her noble grandfather?"

"Not at all, countess," replied Lady Thaxter, in a tone of disappointment. "She is fair, and so is he, but her hair is a fawn colour—"

"Golden?" interposed the Hungarian countess, involuntarily, with a glance at the shimmering head of Honor Glint.

"Like Honor's?" "No, it is, as I said, a pale fawn colour, not rare, not beautiful, although glossy and well kept. She is not quite so slender as Honor, but she is certainly very pretty." Her eyes are not like Floyd's eyes, but are blue.

"Blue!" exclaimed the Hungarian countess, with another glance at Honor Glint's softly vivid eyes of tender dusk. "Oh, no, Lady Thaxter, they are black."

Lady Thaxter smiled, her glance following that of the countess.

"You fancy that Miss Floyd resembles her grandfather," she said, "or that she looks like Honor. But, countess, Miss Glint's conjunction of dark eyes and golden hair is rare in England as elsewhere. You will not meet many young ladies of that peculiar type anywhere. (Miss Floyd is simply an ordinarily pretty and well-mannered young lady.)"

The countess flushed a little, and presently she asked, in low, fluttering tones:

"Will his lordship's nephew, Mr. Darrel Moor, accompany the baron and his grand-daughter here to-day, Lady Thaxter?"

Only Sir Hugh Tregaron noticed the suppressed eagerness of the countess, the breathless suspense in which she waited for an answer, the fluttering of colour in and out of her cheeks. His suspicions of Lady Rothsmere's relations to Darrel Moor found confirmation in her hidden agitation at the very thought of seeing him.

"No," said Lady Thaxter, placidly, unconscious of all this by-play. "Mr. Moor is in Lancashire."

Honor Glint turned pale with a sudden fear. She well knew that Darrel Moor's presence in Lancashire concerned herself. Sir Hugh endeavored to reassure her by a look.

"We can all guess why Darrel Moor is in that part of the country," continued Lady Thaxter, also looking at Honor. "But his designs, happily, will all be frustrated. While he is searching in that quarter Honor is safe and cherished here. But if he were in London I could not invite him to my house. He has been accustomed to come in frequently, the families being intimate, but I can never receive him here again."

The countenance of Lady Rothsmere changed. Sir Hugh could not tell whether she was glad or sorry that she was not likely to meet Darrel Moor. He would have given much to be able to read her heart at that moment.

"There is a third guest invited here to-day," remarked Lady Thaxter. "She is Miss Floyd, companion and friend, and has been a mother to her all her life. She was Miss Floyd's nurse in her infancy, and received the little child as a precious charge from the dying mother's arms. She is the most devoted of attendants."

The countess looked surprised and singularly disturbed.

"Do people of rank invite persons of the lower classes to dine with them?" she inquired. "Pardon me, dear Lady Thaxter, but I am surprised that you invite a child's hired nurse to dine with you."

Lady Thaxter coloured at the implied reflection, and hastened to say:

"But this woman is not a menial, not an ordinary nurse, countess. She is a lady by birth and breeding; she was the daughter, and is the widow, of a curate. She is plainly a lady, and Lord Waldemar has chosen to constitute her the companion of his grand-daughter. She had fallen upon evil days when Mrs. Wallace Floyd took her into her service, more as a companion and friend than as a hired attendant. She was devoted to Mrs. Floyd, and reverses her memory."

The Hungarian countess looked amazed.

"What is this person's name?" she inquired.

"Mrs. Watchley. That must be the Waldemar carriage now," said Lady Thaxter. "Our guests have arrived."

Lady Thaxter excused herself and went out into the hall to receive her guests and to conduct Miss Floyd and Mrs. Watchley to a dressing-room.

Lord Waldemar went into the drawing-room, and presently the hostess came in, followed by her guests.

Lady Thaxter presented Hilda Floyd to the Hungarian countess, who stood up, white and trembling, with a look of actual horror in her blue eyes.

She might have been looking upon the Gorgon's head rather than upon a pretty young English girl to judge from the frozen stare upon her beautiful face.

Even Lady Thaxter noticed her friend's strange manner, and was astonished at it.

Lady Rothsmere crashed down the agitation that threatened to overwhelm her, and with a gentle dignity, full of sweetness, bowed low to Miss Floyd. But she did not follow the English custom and hold out her hand.

As the custom is falling into disuse among newly introduced persons and mere acquaintances, and as

Lady Rothsmere was a foreigner, the omission, of course, was unnoticed.

The hostess presented Mrs. Watchley to the Hungarian countess, who regarded her keenly and sharply, yet graciously entered into conversation with her.

Lady Thaxter conveyed Miss Floyd to the little group composed of Lord Waldemar, Honor Glint, and Sir Hugh Tregaron, and the young people were made acquainted.

"I have been listening to the romantic story of Miss Floyd, Mrs. Watchley," said Lady Rothsmere, making room for Hilda Floyd's companion beside her upon the sofa. "Lady Thaxter does not thoroughly understand the story, I believe. She assured me that you had been with Miss Floyd from the hour of her mother's death, and that you received the child from her dying mother's arms. I am greatly interested in a story so deliciously romantic, and I trust I am not intrusive in speaking on the subject?"

"Not at all, my lady, not at all," said Mrs. Watchley, delighted at being questioned by a real countess, and anxious to promote an intimacy with a lady of such superb and distinguished presence. You were correctly informed by Lady Thaxter, but she did not tell you all. I have watched over Hilda from her birth, and I love her as if she were my own child."

"I daresay, madam," said the countess, softly, yet with a perplexed look in her blue eyes. "Were you acquainted with Mrs. Wallace Floyd, Lord Waldemar's poor young daughter-in-law, who died at Trieste?"

"Oh, yes, my lady. I was her friend and confidant," sighed Mrs. Watchley. "I was with her through her illness, and she gave the child at last into my care, enjoining me to bring it up tenderly, to educate it, and to finally place her in her rightful position as Lord Waldemar's heiress. At the old lord's death she will be a peeress in her own right."

"Yes," assented Lady Rothsmere, slowly, and with an inscrutable look in her eyes.

Lord Waldemar approached the countess, and addressed himself to her with such *empressment* that Mrs. Watchley arose and approached the youthful group.

Miss Floyd introduced her companion to Miss Glint, and the conversation flowed on.

The dinner was announced at eight o'clock, and the company transported themselves to the dining-room.

The simple "family dinner" proved itself a triumph of the French cook who presided over Lady Thaxter's cuisine, and was in every way faultless.

The wines recommended themselves to a connoisseur like Lord Waldemar, and there were odourless flowers in the tall silver *epargnes*, and hot-house fruits in profusion. The lights glowed softly with mellow radiance through their misty globes, and the fire-light in the grates was glad, ruddy and genial.

They lingered over the dessert, but the gentlemen returned with the ladies to the drawing-room. Lord Waldemar would not go to Westminster that evening, the reading of the bill in which he was interested having been deferred twenty-four hours, and he devoted himself to the lovely Hungarian countess with an odd fluttering of his stern old heart. Despite the fidelity to the memory of the dead wife who would always be young to him—despite the fact that he could never love again with the youthful ardour he had given her—despite the fact that the sacred memory of the lost one was more to him, and would always be more to him than the love of any living woman—yet his stern eyes softened with a strange tenderness as they rested upon the young widow's beautiful face, or as he met the glances of her radiant eyes.

"There is no idiot like an old idiot," he said to himself a dozen times that evening.

Lady Rothsmere improved an opportunity afforded by a temporary diversion of her elderly admirer in Honor Glint's direction to approach Miss Floyd, who was at the moment engaged in turning over the leaves of a volume of engravings.

"You are nearly or quite as great a stranger in England as I am, Miss Floyd," said the countess, with a genial smile. "Have you seen Lady Thaxter's conservatory yet? No? Let me show you the way to it. It is a perfect bower of fragrance and beauty, and most young ladies are fond of flowers."

Flattered, as Mrs. Watchley had been, by the attentions of the distinguished countess, Hilda replied that she adored flowers, and especially desired to see Lady Thaxter's conservatory. Lady Rothsmere conducted her through the inner drawing-room and into the boudoir in which her memorable interview with Sir Hugh Tregaron had transpired.

One side of this room was formed of plate-glass sliding doors, behind which was a galaxy of bloom and fragrance. The glass door slid back at the touch of one of Lady Rothsmere's jewelled fingers, and she stepped into a broad bright aisle, bordered by banks of flowers, looking like one mass of bloom.

Hilda Floyd followed close behind her, plucking at the flowers as she went.

The Hungarian countess led the way into the very centre of the large conservatory, and halted beside a fountain which was in full play. The lights were very mellow and tender in this room, no gas being employed within it. A hundred tiny, slow-burning waxen tapers shone like fire-flies from the midst of thickets of tropical shrubs, and glowed upon the walls, and dotted the glass dome high up and peeped out from trailing vines, giving a fairy-like air of enchantment to the scene.

"It is very beautiful," said Hilda Floyd, trailing her fingers through the bright waters filling the basin of the fountain. "I must have grandpapa put our conservatory in order. I will outdo this, charming as it is."

"Will your grandpapa do as you wish?" asked Lady Rothsmere, tossing a spray of blossoms on the water, and appearing to watch them intently. "Most grandpapas are surly, I have discovered."

"Mine is no exception to the rule," laughed Miss Floyd. "But I am to succeed him, you know, so he can't refuse me anything. Besides, Lady Rothsmere, although grandpapa is cross he is not stingy."

"He does not look cross," said the countess, launching another spray. "He must love you very tenderly."

Miss Floyd shrugged her shoulders.

"Grandpapa is odd," she remarked. "Because I do not look like my father, but like my mother, he does not like me. As if I were accountable for my looks! I am glad I don't look like him. He seems fairly devoted to Miss Glint because she has black eyes and yellow hair. He says she looks like his son."

The sensitive mouth of Lady Rothsmere was drawn as with sudden pain, and her brows contracted above her radiant blue eyes, and her face showed agitation.

"The world is all a mystery," said her ladyship, in a troubled voice. "I seem to be in the midst of a frightful labyrinth, and I can find no clue—no clue."

Miss Floyd was puzzled.

"Are you trying to find a clue to something, Lady Rothsmere?" she asked, politely.

"Your sleeve is trailing in the water, Miss Floyd," said the countess, starting forward. "It is all wet. Permit me to assist you."

She gathered up the flowing sleeves of lace and silk, and pressed them tightly between her hands, laying the arm with its bracelets bare.

Her ladyship's eyes searched the arm, while her hands busied themselves with the dress.

She detected a faint, peculiar scar upon the white flesh.

"What is that?" she demanded, with a singular excitement.

"That is a mark I have had since my babyhood," answered Miss Floyd, wondering. "I cut it with papa's knife, which had been carelessly left within my reach. Why, how white you look, Lady Rothsmere. Are you ill?"

"Only a little faint," said the Hungarian countess, in a weak and troubled voice. "I am subject to attacks of faintness. The scar is a little singular, but not at all a blemish, Miss Floyd. You are fortunate to have only one, and that so small and unimportant."

"It is not so unimportant since it played a part in establishing my identity in grandpapa's eyes," declared Miss Floyd, proudly. "I have more than one. I have a scar like a dagger mark on my arm, such as papa had when born; and that, I can assure you, is a very important mark, as you can understand when you know how great an estate is this of Waldemar."

"It is a bit of evidence then which goes to establish your identity with Hilda Floyd. I understand."

The Hungarian countess questioned Miss Floyd at length, with the greatest appearance of interest, and the vain girl, flattered and pleased, responded freely. They returned at length to the drawing-room, and as they proceeded thither Lady Rothsmere's blue eyes were full of a perplexity, and she murmured to herself, in a tone too low for ears other than her own:

"Oh, if I could but find a clue!"

(To be continued.)

A FIG FOR POTATOES.—A gentleman in one of the Transatlantic states having accidentally discovered that figs are excellent food for swine, is about to set out an orchard of trees for that purpose. They are no doubt a most excellent food for swine, but we in Europe have come to such a pass that the notion of feeding animals on these luxuries sounds quite Utopian. The fig is precisely one of those fruits which, as containing positive nourishment, should enter far more largely than they do into our ordinary supply of food. We may, indeed, by the failure of our resources as regards meat, be compelled to study the question of nourishment with greater care and accuracy, and gradually come to understand how dried figs could form an important part in the commissariat.



[ON FIRE.]

FROM THE FLAMES.

BETH was buying spangles. She stood before the tall glass case, a childish figure in a weather-beaten black alpaca dress to which she gave an unconscious style, with a little black turban surmounting a halo of golden hair which fell about a face and throat so exquisitely white and pure that one was prepared for the expression of the wide, sad "Cenci eyes" that looked up into the shopkeeper's face and asked "How much?" with such dreamy earnestness.

The shopkeeper weighed or counted or somehow gauged the spangles—a handful of sparkling silver crescents and gilt stars—and, receiving his pay from Beth's minute purse, did not even go through the ceremony of asking if she would have "anything more."

Beth took her parcel and turned away. It was about noon of a crisp October day, and the fashionable shop was crowded. Beth never went to cheap places. She liked once in a while to mix with those gay, luxurious buyers, as if she too was buying gaily and luxuriously.

What marvels the case and counter held as she stepped along with her handful of spangles and her small purse.

Something attracted her so that she unconsciously paused. It was a cushion of white satin and seed-pearls. A gentleman was talking about it, giving directions; it was for a bridal gift.

He turned suddenly, to Beth's confusion. Their eyes met.

If any one present had been sufficiently interested to remark, they would have seen that they did not meet for the first time. Yet there was no recognition—far from it.

The gentleman turned hastily to conclude his order, purchasing at the same time a needle-book, or some such trifle, which chanced to lie before him, while Beth, with hot cheeks, hurried out of the shop.

She had not gone many steps, however, when

Harold Dexter overtook her. She had turned the corner from the main street; they stood in the shadow of the high buildings.

"I think you dropped this parcel," he said, extending the trifle he had just purchased; "allow me to return it," and he lifted his hat as though the shabby turban had been a coronet.

Beth never in her life saw into pretences; she was too straightforward.

"Oh, no, indeed! I bought nothing but these spangles," she said.

If she could only have said it with less flute-like music in her tones, if she could only have looked less bewitchingly pretty, she would have spared Harold Dexter some of the selfish exultation and delight he had felt on his discovering that the myth who had led his steps nightly for a month to the same theatre, and who, despite his endeavours, had always eluded him, was actually flesh and blood and susceptible of identification, if no more.

Mixed with Harold's delight, however, was a certain embarrassment. There were a dignity and a refinement about the little actress which put Mr. Dexter at a distance he was not prepared for.

"Ah, then you did not drop it?" he said, still walking slowly beside her. "It is of no use to me, as you see; perhaps you will accept it."

She looked at him wonderingly.

"Oh, no, sir. My father—"

"It is your father, then, who guards you so jealously?"

"Yes, sir. My father and I are all that are left to each other."

"Your father was an actor, I think?"

"Oh, no; a musician—a cornet player. He had paralysis. That is why—"

"That is why you are on the stage, I suppose?"

"Yes, sir."

"But your father ought not to deprive you of all companions of your own age. You would be happier with friends."

"I don't know. Please leave me now. I am almost home."

"Won't you tell me your name?"

"Brittain."

"Mine is Harold Dexter. Good-bye, Miss Brittain."

Harold watched the child—she was about sixteen—till she disappeared within her door.

"She is quite out of the common way," was his comment. "Good blood, I will vouch for it. And such beauty! The old cornet player does well to guard her." And he murmured Tennyson's lines:

"A man had given all other bliss
And all his worldly worth for this;
To waste his whole soul in one kiss
Upon her perfect lips."

After which effusion Mr. Dexter strolled to his club, smoked through a day-dream, descanted on independence, and wondered whether a pearl of such price as Beth Brittain would not be well won at any cost.

Meanwhile Beth went slowly upstairs, after her adventure, to her attic. There was a tell-tale dye in her cheeks, a new excitement in her heart. Her father was cowering over an expiring fire, and told Beth she had been gone too long.

"It was so bright out of doors," she said, kissing him tenderly.

For that matter the room was bright, too. The cosy curtains, the sofa covered with purple袍, its great pillows, the crayon-heads that adorned the walls, and the singing bird were bright things, which helped to make up the sum of Beth's bright life.

She flew to her work, scattering the spangles over the gauzy dress, and at last folding it very carefully in a great basket along with her silk stockings and little white boots.

By this time the afternoon was waning.

Beth fed the fire to a blaze, made tea and toast, set the tiny table, broiled the salmon, opened a pot of jam, and chatted incessantly while she presided at the feast.

"It is too bad, papa, for you to go out in the cold. I might go with Laramy to the theatre."

But the old cornet player was obstinate.

"No, Beth, darling, not while I live. The way is too slippery."

In spite of herself Beth threw her first glance, when the play began, into Harold Dexter's seat. She had grown to know it.

However, he was not in it.

A feeling of keen disappointment came over her. Never had a play been so tedious, an evening so wearisome. Yet what had she lost? Was not all the same as it had been the night before?

Another day went by, another evening, another. Still Harold Dexter did not cross her path again; and Beth cried in her little bed at night. She could scarcely have told at what.

At the expiration of a week, coming home one morning from a rehearsal, her astonishment was great to find Mr. Dexter and her father in animated conversation.

Harold, with a warning glance, prevented her from betraying her recognition, and then Mr. Brittain explained to his daughter that the young gentleman had sought his services for musical instruction. He was to give him lessons on his beloved cornet.

Strange, stolen sweets were the joys of the lovers during the weeks that ensued—joys unmixt with doubt or calculation. They were happy in a thousand indefinable ways which meant nothing and everything.

But one night the old musician went to bed more ailing than usual. Beth was startled from her light slumbers by a strange sound.

She flew to her father's bedside. He attempted to press her hand, but was powerless to do so. He prevented her, however, from leaving him to go for assistance.

"The end has come, Beth," he whispered, faintly.

"Are you afraid?"

"Oh, father!" sobbed the girl, "you must not leave me all alone."

"Hush, child, there is One above. We have a friend, too, Beth. You have not guessed it, but—he loves you. You may trust Harold Dexter, dear."

These words were stored in the mind of Beth as a precious legacy from the dying man. But, weak and simple and broken, what could he foresee?

The cold glimmer of the winter day came, and Beth was alone with her dead.

It was the morning for Harold's lesson, and when he came it was to find that the silver cord of the old musician's soul was loosed, its music henceforth mute.

He took Beth's cold hand in his.

"You are not alone, Beth, darling—I am left."

That was all.

In that supreme hour, as in the days that followed, they forgot that they were free, that the restraint which had characterized their demeanour towards each other was no longer necessary.

Or, if Harold could not forget it, there was something in Beth's dignity of grief that made her sacred. He hovered around her, though, with wordless

homage. He brought flowers every day to the dreary little room; he surrounded her with an atmosphere of tenderness which none knew better how to diffuse. And if—deep down in his man's heart, which had gone to her at first without hint of guile—there crept a dangerous sense of security, a feeling that there was naught between her and him now, it did not betray itself to Beth, and she did not even suspect, as possibly she might have suspected but for her father's dying words.

A week had passed since the funeral. Beth could not afford to stay away from the theatre longer.

She was to go to rehearsal again that afternoon, and Harold had dropped in for a moment to ask her if he should not send a carriage to take her.

"Oh, no. It will be better for me to go just as I always have done," she said, with a wondrous tenderness in her face at his goodness.

He drew a case of bronzed leather from his pocket. "Beth," he said, very seriously, "I have brought you a present to-day that you cannot refuse." And he took from the case a necklace made of her father's silver-white hair, with a locket of one of his own dark curls.

As he fastened it about her neck her tears fell upon his hand. He drew her towards him.

"What should I do without you, Harold?" she whispered.

"I don't know, Beth; but I know you may do what you like with me."

"You are so good."

"Don't call me good. I am afraid I am a sad, selfish sort of fellow. But I love you dearly, and I think that redeems some faults."

"You could not do anything that was not kind and noble, Harold."

"I want you never to think otherwise, darling. You are my guiding star. I shall forget the shame and shortcomings of my other life with you."

"What other life? Do you lead two lives, Harold?"

"I never led one in which there was any real happiness till I knew my little Beth," he replied. Then he kissed her again. "That is a holier seal than book or ring can give," he said.

"They go together—book and ring and true love's kiss, Harold."

"Yes; more's the shame that one ever goes without the other."

The rehearsal was over, and Beth sat in the corner of an omnibus, on her way home. A couple of ladies were opposite her—fashionable, elegant women, who never bestowed so much as a glance at the face of the little actress. Beth, too, was busy with her thoughts, and had hardly noticed them, till a remark of one caught her ear.

"There is Harold—with Julia Deblois—can it be—"

"That he will marry her? Of course."

"I can't believe it. He loves beauty so."

"He loves luxury more. I never thought he had much principle."

"Well, I pity him."

"I pity her."

"That is true. She is to be pitied. I shall be glad when he is disposed of—the arrant flirt and heart-breaker."

"As to that, he'll flirt and break hearts all the same, married or single," was the response, after which the speaker rose and left the vehicle.

Beth had some distance to go still. She cowered in her corner, with a shudder. She had seen Harold—her Harold; she had heard every word they said. It was like a death-blow.

She went home and sewed roses on her dress, made more roses into a wreath, and drank some tea.

A bunch of flowers came from Harold. She laid them down with a strange feeling; how sweet they would have been a few hours before.

One of the actresses who lived near stopped for her now, in the evening, for company.

"You'll have to borrow my rouge to-night, if you never did before. What ails you?" she said.

Then she remembered that Beth hadn't played before since her father died.

"Poor little thing," she said; "Heaven help you! You'll learn that white cheeks and sad hearts are luxuries not to be enjoyed in our line."

Harold was not in his place at the theatre that night, and Beth played with a blur before her eyes.

The scene might have been clondland, the audience elves, for all she saw to the contrary. But although Harold was not there, there was one person who watched her performance with interest as critical.

"You are acting better than you are looking to-night, Miss Brittain," said the manager to her, between the acts. "Let Laramy touch your cheeks; they are ghastly before the footlights."

"Oh, no," answered Beth, shrinking back, "I never do."

"Don't stand in your own light, my good girl," continued the manager. "You have made a hit this evening. I shall double your salary. Here, Laramy."

Laramy was the woman who had come with Beth for company; she was a kind-hearted, muscular creature who did her supernumerary part with about as much artistic appreciation as she might have expended upon a day's washing. She brought her pink-saucer and dabbed Beth's cheeks as she was accustomed to her own.

"Can't you go home with me to-night, Laramy?" Beth asked; "I am so lonesome."

"Of course I will."

"I mean to stay all night with me."

"All night? You know I have Biddy to attend to."

Biddy was a little cripple—whether brother or son or what, nobody knew—whom Laramy took care of.

"He'll be asleep, Biddy will. Please come to-night," said Beth, piteously.

"Well, we'll see; there's the bell. Run along."

With her hand clutched within Laramy's arm, Beth met Harold at the green-room door, at the close of the performance.

"This is my right, Beth, to take you home," he said.

"Laramy is going with me to-night, Harold."

She could not steel her heart against him yet. She clung to Laramy as a protection against herself.

He was offended, however, at her distrust.

"Three spoils company—isn't that so, Laramy?"

I will say good-night."

Beth made no farther remonstrance against her companion going to "tend to Biddy" when they reached her door. She was safe from Harold she thought.

She entered her lonely room, lit the lamp, and threw off her shawl. The only thing she noticed was Harold's flowers fading upon the table where she had thrown them.

She picked them up and clasped them in her arms; she threw herself upon her knees beside a chair and pressed them to her lips.

As she knelt thus the door opened swiftly, and closed. She sprang to her feet, and there stood Harold. He had a little covered basket in his hands.

"Ah, I have caught you," he said, gaily; "why did you send me off to-night?"

She trembled like a leaf; her large, haunting eyes clung to his face as though she was trying to read his very soul.

With the flowers crushed in her hands, her head thrown back, the golden hair dropping over her shoulder, her attitude would have made her fortune before the footlights.

Harold surveyed her with silent admiration.

"What is the matter, Beth?"

"Harold, I believe you are not true to me."

He staggered a little.

"What has that old Laramy been saying to you?"

"Nothing whatever, Harold, about you. I want to know just what your relation is to Miss Julia Deblois."

He had set down his basket; the white grapes peeped through the lifted cover. A keen, swift look went over his face as if he had seen a ghost. He controlled it suddenly.

"My little Beth is—jealous!" he said, in his old persuasive tone, and he advanced towards her with extended hands. But he had not counted upon the strength she had.

"Yes, certainly, Harold, I am jealous at knowing your name is coupled with that of any other woman. I thought your heart and soul and truth belonged to me alone."

"So they do, Beth. Does not my every action prove it every hour?"

"I do not know. I saw you with this Miss Deblois to-day. I do not think you will deny that you had just left her when you came for me to the theatre."

"And if I had, Beth? You forget that a man of the world and in society has claims upon him, duties to perform. It ought to suffice you that I have no heart except for you alone, no pleasure except in your society."

She shook her head.

"It is not enough, Harold; we two are alone before Heaven. I have no safeguard except in your pure honour. You cannot do me half-way justice. Either you are wholly true or wholly false. I must know which to-night."

She was bewitching in her dignity to the last degree. Harold Dexter's heart burned as never before at the sight of her loveliness. She had reminded him, too, of what he was not slow to recollect—that she was wholly in his power.

"You may know to-night, at once, Beth," he exclaimed, advancing towards her, "that I am true to you to my heart's core. You are my own before Heaven—"

She raised her hand with a gesture of command, and retreated as he sought to clasp her in his arms.

"Do not touch me, Harold. You assume too much."

"Why, little Beth?" he asked, humbly, "do I assume more than all the world does—that portion of

it, at least, that knows of my devoted visits, my open adoration?"

She held him off still, with the dangerous flash of her eyes, the intense command of her gesture.

"There has never been anything in your visits to compromise my name, Harold. There never shall be. Go!"

"Beth, it is too late!"

And he advanced another step towards her.

She threw her arms upward. The crushed flowers fell at her feet.

"Oh, Laramy!" she cried, with piercing entreaty, "Laramy!" And the walls seemed to deaden and mock her impotent prayer. "Will no one help me?"

"Do you want help?" burst from a gruff voice at the door, and Laramy strode into the room.

Beth stretched her hands towards her protector without a word.

Laramy stood with folded arms surveying Harold, the situation dawning upon her.

"I felt uneasy, some way, about you. So after I tended to Biddy I thought I'd just stop round. You may go, sir," she added to Harold; "I shall be here to see to Miss Brittain."

"I am glad to leave her in such efficient hands," said Harold, with a glance at Laramy's muscular make in general, and at the vicious grip wherewith she held her own arms tightly crossed in particular.

"Good-night, Beth, and good-bye—till to-morrow," he said, in his sweet, meaning tones.

"Poor little bird, to think she wanted me," said the great woman, gathering up the cold, limp form of Beth as she cowered against the wall.

"I was uneasy, Laramy; it frightened me to have Mr. Dexter stay so late. It was silly of me."

"You'd no lovers as long as your father lived," said Laramy, severely.

"Mr. Dexter wishes to marry me," said Beth, the least bit resentfully. "My father knew him and trusted him. Dear, good Laramy!" she added, with a sudden reaction, "you must not leave me any more."

"No, Beth Brittain, not till you've a sealed and sworn protector, that I won't."

Beth clung to those last words of Harold's—"till to-morrow." She believed that he would come again. If he did come he knew now upon what grounds alone she would receive him.

She believed in the power of his love for her—was there ever a woman who did not entertain such a faith, until proof after proof that she did not believe was branded upon her heart and scorched within her soul?

But Harold Dexter's "to-morrow" came not.

Day by day Beth watched for him, her little room made tidy and cheery with books and birds and flowers, her dress, improved with ampler means, arranged to charm his taste. Day after day she waited, and yet he did not come.

Beth never went out, except to the theatre; she was so afraid of missing him.

Her cheeks grew whiter, her eyes looked larger and darker.

"You will ruin your prospects with all this fretting," said Laramy as Beth cried by night and fasted by day.

But Laramy was wrong.

Poor Beth's hurt heart threw its pathos and passion into her playing, unaware. Her "hit" ripened to success.

She sprang from the dim, nebulous nothingness of dramatic life into its glowing centre—a star. She had plenty of money now that there was no one to reap any good from it, and plenty of approbation now that the flavour and relish of such things were gone. She studied hard though, ripening to more perfect art and to a greater popularity.

But Harold Dexter's "to-morrow" did not come; and Harold himself, his face, his voice, his pledge grew to her like a far-away, painful dream from which one awakens with sobs and cries.

She moved from her poor old lodgings, and had rooms at a comfortable hotel, with Laramy for her duenna. She had friends and admirers in abundance, too, but, for all they touched her, her heart might have been of stone.

Time wore on, and Beth was to have a benefit.

The play-bills heralded it in flaming type, and photographs of the fair face, that kept its infantile purity of expression still, looked from shop windows, and found a place on many a wall.

Beth stood thoughtfully before the mirror of the dressing-room, in the airy dress of white lace which became her delicate beauty so well.

She was not thinking of it or of the applause which had greeted her throughout the evening. In a few minutes she must return to the stage, and carry the play to its dénouement.

But the burden of her "part" was far from her mind.

She stood before the mirror, seeing the Past, its toils and privations and uncertainties, and also its happiness.

Beth was far from happy now.

She missed something whose void made her heart

acht. She looked at the flowers that had been cast at her feet through the evening—so many that they heaped the table before her. What were they compared to a bunch she had crushed in her arms and cast at her feet long ago?

She glanced at the necklace that circled her fair throat—a magnificent gift that had been made her, blazing with emeralds, diamonds and pearls—what was it compared with a slender strand woven of silver hair and fastened to a locket which she never wore?

She stood sad, thoughtful. Her career had given her its best reward—unsullied fame—but it had left her inner life a blank.

"I will leave my profession," she said to herself, dreamily. "I will go away to some place where I can do good and find contentment."

And then she heard the bell ring to summon her to the stage.

The play ended amid vociferous applause, which called Beth before the curtain.

As she courtesied gracefully, her glance wandered in the dreamy, expectant fashion which had become habitual to her over the enthusiastic throng. Suddenly she became pale.

Out of the vision of the Past into which she had been gazing rose a face, unmistakable, too well remembered.

Harold Dexter was standing, his brilliant eyes fastened upon Beth's white face. He held a wreath of myrtle and roses which, as their eyes met, he threw.

She stooped forward unconsciously, holding out her hands so that they received the tribute, her eyes still upon the giver.

At the instant, as she moved to withdraw, a hushed shriek of terror went through the audience, their eyes fastened, their fingers pointing towards her with the paralysis of panic. The smile upon Beth's lips faded in a sort of wondering unconcern. Then, a scorching shrill hissed about her feet; hot tongues of flame darted in and out of the gauzy folds of her dress. She knew she was on fire. Her face was calm, as those nearest her could see. She raised her arms, with Harold Dexter's wreath still in her grasp, and seemed to resign herself to her horrible fate without an outcry.

At this juncture a gentleman of the audience sprang upon the stage, threw his overcoat about the burning girl, and strode away with her in his arms behind the scenes.

It was a terrible finale to the evening's triumph. The lookers-on shuddered as they went their way and said it was shameful that such things should be so common; the footlights should be better protected, and so on.

It fared better with poor Beth than it might have once in such an ordeal. She had comforts and sympathy in plenty. Her door was besieged with inquiries, with fruits, notes, flowers; while Laramy stood guard to keep the too solicitous aloof, and Doctor Arden, whose promptness had rescued the girl from immediate death, hung over his patient with untiring zeal and tender skill.

The crisis came and passed. Beth was safe, only she would bear for ever upon her beautiful shoulders the scars of the flames.

But, although safe, the great shock and consequent suffering made quiet indispensable for long weeks.

During that period of convalescence Doctor Arden, though his services were no longer needed, seemed to feel it his privilege to continue his visits day by day.

"I shall have to ask you for your bill, some day, doctor," said Beth, laughingly, one morning when he had made a sort of apology for his protracted stay.

His countenance sobered very suddenly. "Miss Brittain," he said, "I hope you will always consider that the indebtedness is all upon my side."

"You have a curious way of looking at things, doctor," she replied.

"You would not say so if I dare explain all that I have derived from our acquaintance."

There was so little of romance or the romantic about this good, thoughtful, middle-aged physician that Beth for a minute did not suspect a compliment, still less so serious a one as was intended.

"What can the acquaintance have been to you, doctor?" was her innocent query.

His look enlightened her somewhat as she raised her eyes. For an instant both were silent.

"I know I must not say what I would; not yet, that is. Forgive me—"

"Doctor Arden? I forgive, who owe you all—"

"Beth," he said, folding his arms and leaning against the mantel, while he looked down upon her in her chair, "is there any hope that your profession will ever be insufficient for your happiness? that you will ever crave a man's love and home—like other women?"

She steadied her voice.

"I have known that craving once, Doctor Arden,

"There are scars within my breast as deep as these," touching the marks of the flames.

"Ah, you have loved—at your age—while I have waited all my life. Did you say 'had loved,' Beth? or—"

"I will tell you my story," she said.

He took a seat before her. The morning sunshine came through the curtains; the sweet scent of spring violets rose from a vase at Beth's side. Very simply, as if, some way, she was talking of another, she told this whole story, word for word, about Harold Dexter.

"From that night I never saw him," she concluded, "until he rose in the theatre to throw the wreath which was the inadvertent cause of the accident."

"You have not seen him, I presume, since?" said Doctor Arden.

His voice sounded dreary, for something in her story told him he must give her up.

"Yes, I have seen him—"

"Here—since your illness?"

"Yes."

"Why could I not have known? He brings you back his love, of course? He justifies himself—he wins you, for all he deserves to lose you?"

"He tells me this," said Beth, "I suppose it is the truth: that when he left me after that miserable interview which Laramy interrupted he went home to struggle with himself, to discover whether he could make the sacrifice of marrying an obscure actress. He counted the cost of gratifying his fancy, and weighed it against prudence, ambition, common sense. The scales hitched, and he could not decide. Fortune came to his rescue with an offer which would take him from the scene of his conflict. He went upon an Embassy, travelled, studied, plunged into adventure, and at the expiration of three years came home to find that he still loved me."

"And when he told you this—"

"—said Doctor Arden, for it seemed as if Beth could say no more.

Her form swelled; a dash of crimson poured into her pale cheeks.

"When I saw him I loathed him," she said, quietly.

"That is because of indignation at what you have suffered through him," answered Doctor Arden, stilling his own agitation.

"It is because I know the possibilities of his bad heart," returned Beth, scornfully. "He himself lifted the veil from my illusion, and left me free."

They sat silent a long time.

"Have I then no rival, Beth, but a memory? May I hope that the time I await may come—perhaps when you are older, with something of the dazzle of your beauty gone? I shall love you just as well without it, Beth."

She laid her hand upon his.

"Does not my disfigurement—my scars—disenchant you?" she interrupted.

"I remember that I took you from the flames," he replied.

"I remember it, too. I do not know what better title you could have whereby to claim me," was Beth's grave reply.

W. H. P.

BOLIVIA.—The peculiar geographical position of Bolivia, which country commands a very small portion of the Pacific coast, has no doubt in a great measure diverted the attention of the English public to the adjoining South American States, which possess a greater extent of coast, and are consequently in a direct communication with Europe. The population of Bolivia exceeds 2,500,000. The vegetable productions of the country are of the most varied character, including both those of tropical and those of temperate climates; while the minerals to be found are, without contradiction, the richest and most abundant in the world. In the north, not far from La Paz, the most important town, we find copper in an almost pure state, besides other very valuable metals, which are only awaiting the construction of the railway between La Paz and Arica, via Tacna, to be brought into the European markets. All along the west side of the Andes saltpetre is most abundant, and, without dwelling on the world-renowned silver mines of Potosí, the late discoveries of silver ore in the district of Garacoles will make Bolivia a second California. In less than twelve months two cities, containing more than 15,000 enterprising men, have sprung up where no human being was previously to be found, and who knows where this immigration will end? A railway is to be constructed connecting the mines with the coast, and for this purpose not less than twenty-nine proposals have been made to the government by highly respectable Chilean and other firms, who not only undertake to build the railway without any guarantee or subvention, but actually offer to the government a premium in the shape of money, the construction of quays, or otherwise. Another and most important source of wealth to Bolivia is found

in the deposits of guano of Mejillones. No official survey has been made, but from private information, which, as a rule, is more to be relied upon than any official document, what can be seen of the deposits is estimated at more than 30,000,000 tons. The political state of Bolivia is entirely satisfactory. Senor Morales, who is at present at the head of the government, after having overthrown the rule of the late General Melgarejo, is making every effort to promote the commercial and financial prosperity of the country, and to secure the due administration of the laws and respect for the rights of all classes of the community.

FAÇETIÆ.

CAN a man who has been fined by the magistrates over and over again be considered a refined man?

An old wine-bibber says that an empty champagne bottle is like an orphan, because it has lost its pop.

"MAN is a mystery," said a young lady to her beau. "Yes, dear," said he, "and a girl is a misery."

FESLING REMARK.—"Happy is the country that has no history," as the schoolboy said on being flogged for the third time for not knowing who was Henry the Sixth's wife.—Punch.

A FISHY PRONUNCIATION.

Old Lady: "Igh, conductor, do you go to Paternoster Row?"

Conductor: "No, mum! But we can put yer down near Billingsgate!"—Fun.

A GRIM, hard-headed old judge, after hearing a flowery discourse from a pretentious young barrister, advised him to pluck out some of the feathers from the wings of his imagination and put them into the tail of his judgment.

A FREE RENDERING.

Stout Old Party: "Yes, my dear boy, you see I go in for quality rather than quantity—a sort of pro rata principle, eh?"

Charley: "Hum, that means to say you've given up drinking in a great measure I suppose!"—Fun.

At a trade meeting the following toast was given:—"The printer: he beats the farmer with his Hoe, the carpenter with his rule, the mason in setting up columns; he surpasses the lawyer and doctor in attending cases, and beats the parson in the management of the devil."

AN UNWISE CHILD.

Minnie (aged six, to bearded Papa, who has just returned after a five years' residence in the Australian Bush: "I don't like you. You are too rough; I'm sorry you ever married into our family."—Punch.

"SAL" cried a girl, looking down from the upper storey, addressing another girl, who was trying to enter the front door, "we've all been to meeting, and we have been converted; so when you want milk on Sunday you'll have to come round to the back door."

RULE OF PROPORTION.

Garrulous Old Party: "Each of you five years old? Why, I'm more than eight times as old as both of you put together, my dears! What do you think of that, eh? What do you think of that?"

Elder of Twins: "Well, you're not very tall for your age, sir!"—Punch.

OUR RESERVES.—THE BATTLE OF AMESBURY.

Aide-de-Camp: "Good gracious, sir! why don't you order your men to lie down under this hill?"

Colonel of Volunteers: "So I did, sir. But they won't lie down. They say they want to see the review!"—Punch.

SOMETHING NEAT.

Customer (demurely): "Half a quarter of 'Old Tom,' if you please! And could you oblige me with a bit of sugar?"

Gallant Boniface: "Very sorry I can't serve you, miss! But the new Act is very strict; we are not allowed to serve young people apparently under sixteen!"—Punch.

"WHO'S TO PAY?"

Mr. Lowe: "Let me congratulate you, my dear sir, on the happy settlement of our American difficulty! A little over three millions to pay!—a mere trifle!"

Paterfamilias: "Yes, it's all very well! But, mind, you're not going to stink on that twopenny again!"—Punch.

TWADDLEGRAPHY.—The Daily News seems to be going in for twaddlegraphy. One of its correspondents, describing the Prince of Wales's visit to Salisbury Cathedral, says: "The Prince, accompanied by the Duke of Cambridge and the Duke of Teck, arrived at half-past ten at the west door. The beautiful cathedral stood silently and solemnly on the greenward in the close." Now, the obstinacy of this cathedral is beyond all patience. A well-

regulated cathedral should have known better than to have "stood silently" in the presence of royalty. Why did it not say "How do, your royal highnesses?" or something courteous? Then, again, why should it stand "on the greenward in the close" on this particular occasion? Why not stop where it was built?—*Norset.*

REASONABLE.

Wife (returning from shopping): "Hullo, George! what's this? Have you been ordering coals?"

Husband (greatly elated): "No, my dear; but a note from Boggins—actually—most kind—had no luck on the moors. So, as he can't send us any birds, begs our acceptance of half a ton of coals!"

Wife: "How nice! Now we can have that little dinner-party!"—*Punch.*

HORSE-STRALERS AND HEDGE-PEEPERS.—"We are a great people entirely." Let England make that Irish boast. The Ballot is enacted, and we are all bound to carry out the law. At an important Parliamentary election, that for Preston, the clever Conservatives devised a plan which utterly destroyed the secrecy of the vote. Nothing has been done to anybody, and the Conservatives are rather complimented, even by the Liberals, on the neatness and boldness of the dodge. At a two-penny local Board election for East Bacon, or West Ham, or some such place, there was a tampering with voting papers and a medical gentleman of large practice has been sent to jail for fourteen days. There is an old saying about its being as well to be hanged for a sheep as for a lamb, but this is stiff. Steal the lamb and you will be punished heavily; steal a flock of sheep and you will be applauded mightily. Our "Revised Code" of morality is one of the triumphs of an enlightened age.—*Punch.*

THE LABOUR WE DELIGHT IN PHYSICS—

The reports of meetings of Boards of Guardians are always amusing reading; but they do not always combine with the comic element such a touch of the sensational as will be found in the following extract:

Mr. Fuller, the resident Medical Officer, read the usual weekly requirements of drugs, and, in answer to Mr. Carre Tucker, C.B., said that the quantity had increased, and also the price. There was a great jealousy existing amongst the inmates. If one had medicine he was obliged to give it to the others. (Laughter.) Mr. Tucker: But you surely do not give it to them if they are not unwell? Mr. Fuller: No, we give them something, and it is obliged to taste very nasty, or they would not like it. (Renewed laughter.)

Here we have "Oliver asking for more"—tincture of rhubarb; and we cannot help wondering what must be the ordinary fare of paupers who pine for pills, mean for mixtures, and drive for "the draught as before." How unfortunate it is that drugs have risen in the market, or they might have been made to do duty for meat now that its price is so high.—*Fus.*

JONATHAN'S JUDGMENT.

Wal, now we've gained our cause, and the Award.

I guess we can't act now but accord. It is a triumph; that's a fact; but still, They have considerably taxed our bill.

Three millions and a quarter. Come, I say, We axed three hundred millions t'other day. And, if we had got half of that air sum, Of Arbitration somethin' would have come.

John Bull! What's that amount to that old huss?

Ourselves won't feel the gain, nor be the loss.

Our claims cut down as close as madmen's hair,

I guess we shan't make much by that affair.

Bound if we have to be by our own rules, We shall have made ourselves tarnation fools.

When we air called on to, in arter years, Keep filibusters back and privateers.

But then we may repudiate the cause; Not do what we'd have done, but the reverse.

Meanwhile together in a loving cup, Columbian and Britannian liquors up. *Punch.*

A LITERARY DISCOVERY.—A discovery, which will be interesting to literary men all over the world, has lately been made at Odessa. Prince Woronzoff has found among the archives of his family, which he is in the habit of publishing when he discovers anything that illustrates the history of his country, fourteen letters of Voltaire, thirteen of which have never been published, though the fourteenth appeared in the *Correspondance Générale* on the 26th of February, 1780. They are addressed to the Count Alexander Woronzoff, who at the age of seventeen was sent to France, and entered the light cavalry school at Versailles, where all the young nobles of France were educated. The young count was passing through Mannheim when he was invited to some fêtes given by the Elector-Palatine, where he met

Voltaire. An intimacy sprang up between them, and these letters, extending over about ten years, were the result.

REPEAL OF MAGNA CHARTA.—Two Acts for the revision of the statute law were passed during the past session of Parliament without much attention, and have just been printed. A great number of ancient and obsolete enactments are repealed, including a portion of "The Great Charter of the Liberties of England signed by King John at Runnymede, and confirmed by King Edward V.," but only such clauses as are out of date, referring to the marriage of heirs, castle ward, wager of law, vacant abbey, appeal of death by a woman, etc. The other Acts repealed include some curious provisions which have long been inoperative and probably but little known to exist, including laws concerning the refusal of heirs to marry, the bearing of armour by private persons, feits held in churchyards, protection of persons fleeing into the church and defying the realm, house-boot and key-boot within the forest, opening and closing of town-gates, purveyance for the king's dogs and horses, "no servant shall depart from one hundred to another, nor wear a sword" (Richard II.), "no shoemaker shall be a tanner nor any tanner a shoemaker," "none shall hunt except they who have a sufficient living" (both same reign), "no Welshman nor Englishman married to Welshwoman shall bear office, nor shall Welshmen have castles" (Henry IV.), "labourers to be sworn or put in the stocks," laws with respect to Calais (Henry V.) and London apprentices (Henry VI.), "no one but a lord's son shall possess swans" (Edward IV.). Many of the Acts repealed are in Latin.

THE LAST LETTER.

Who knows when the last letter comes:

How tender and touching a sorrow

May hang o'er the commonplace words

The postman shall bring with the morrow.

A little white fluttering fold,

It tells not its terrible story:

Nor whispers 'neath ripples of speech,

Its place in the door-way of glory.

We read it mayhap with a smile,

Then toss it by idly; undreaming.

That, rescued, we'll scan it again.

With glances through bitter rain streaming.

Its chance words of tenderness then

Like gold from the mass shall be sifted;

The speech of our ev'ry day life

Into grandeur and greatness be lifted.

All harshness shall fold itself down,

As the calyx shrinks under the flower,

All blemishes vanish and fade

In the loving regrets of that hour.

The last little blossom dropped out

From the hand on the bank of the river

Shall tell from its petals adroop

Sweet stories of love from the giver. E. J.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

SPOILED HAMS.—To about every 12 lb. of salt put 1 lb. of coarse sugar and 2 oz. of saltpetre; with this you can use either 2 oz. of juniper berries or 2 lb. of coriander seeds in powder, or if for a smoked flavour a few drops of creosote; with these well rub your hams and place them upon a wood grating over a pan or cistern of water in a cellar or cool place. After two days of this give them four more in brine, take out, dry them thoroughly with either bran, pollard, or sawdust, and hang them up.

ODOUR OF FLOWERS.—The delicate odour of pinks and other flowers may be obtained by the following process. Take a glass funnel, with the narrow end drawn to a point. In the funnel place lumps of ice, with salt, by which a very low temperature is produced. The funnel is supported by an ordinary retort stand, and placed near the flowering plants, when water and the ethereal odour of the blossom is deposited on the exterior of the glass funnel, and trickles down to the point from which it drops at intervals into a glass vessel below. The scent thus obtained is very perfect and interesting, but is apt to become sour in a few days unless some pure alcohol is added. By this process many odours may be procured for comparison and study. To obtain the odour in perfection the blossom must be in its prime.

WATER FOR AQUARIUM.—The water must on no account be drawn from a well or pump, and indeed any kind of water that is used for drinking is unfit for the aquarium. The best water is that which is drawn from a river or pond. Ordinary rain-water will, however, answer all purposes, pro-

vided that it is clear, and that the butt from which it is taken has been provided with a cover. The water supplied by the water companies is filtered from nearly all animal and insect life, which constitutes the natural food of the fish, etc. Do not change or renew the water. A little may be added as evaporation takes place, but none must be taken away.

STATISTICS.

POPULATION OF THE UNITED STATES.—According to the latest census the population of the United States is now 38,500,000.

PARLIAMENTARY CONSTITUENCIES.—The number of electors on the register now in force is 2,574,039—viz., 2,094,781 in England and Wales, 253,751 in Scotland, and 223,507 in Ireland. The total is nearly 49,000 more than the number on last year's register, but both registers have many duplicate entries of voters having more than one qualification. The number of county voters is 1,055,213—viz., 800,314 in England and Wales, 79,750 in Scotland, and 175,149 in Ireland; the total and the three items differ very little from the numbers last year, Scotland having a small increase, England and Wales and Ireland a trifling decrease. Of the county voters in England and Wales 242,063 are registered as 121 occupiers. The number of borough voters is 1,518,826—viz., in England and Wales 1,294,467, in Scotland 176,001, and in Ireland 48,458. England and Wales have above 44,000 more borough voters than they had last year, Scotland above 4,000 more, Ireland 677 less. The range of numbers is very great. The county of Middlesex has 23,893 voters, the county of Rutland 2,054. The city of Manchester has 57,157, the borough of Marlborough 627. The constituency of Portarlington has declined from 136 in 1871 to 133 in 1872.

MISCELLANEOUS.

THE PHILOSOPHER Ludwig Feuerbach has recently died at Hamar, near Frankfurt, at the age of 68.

It is stated that Sir Roundell Palmer has given instructions that no more briefs are to be accepted for him.

THE VINTAGE OF GREECE.—The vintage has finished all over Greece, the total quantity of grapes gathered in being nearly 250,000,000 of pounds, of which 10,000,000 have already been exported. The prices fetched have been from 20 to 42 shillings, according to district and quality.

THE EXHIBITION.—For the general convenience of the public and of the exhibitors it has been resolved to keep the London International Exhibition open till Saturday, the 19th October. During the last fortnight small portable objects in the Exhibition which have been sold may be removed by the purchasers, as was done at the International Exhibition of 1862.

GOOD TIDINGS.—It has been stated that the Governments of Belgium and Germany have, in consequence of the increased price of provisions—which is fully felt upon the Continent—increased the salaries of their employees. We understand that salaries of less than 300*l.* a year have had 15 per cent. added to them, while incomes of above that amount have been increased by 10 per cent.

A GREAT TURTLE AT BRIGHTON.—Mr. Lord, the manager of the Brighton aquarium, writes:—"We have just received from Mr. R. J. Smith, of 58, Old Broad Street, London, a remarkably fine specimen of the green turtle, recently imported from the West Indies. The weight of this huge animal is 224 lb. It is one of 700 lately imported by that gentleman, and having been well fed and cared for both on the voyage and since its arrival it is in a very healthy condition, and disports grandly in the large tank with its comrades, the loggerheads."

PARISH CONSTABLES.—It is recited in an Act passed on the day of the prorogation that the establishment of an efficient police in the counties of England and Wales has rendered the general appointment of parish constables unnecessary. After the 24th of March next no parish constable is to be appointed except when deemed necessary by the Quarter Sessions. A paid constable may be appointed for a parish on the application of the vestry, the paid constables already appointed to be continued in office. The duties are set forth and the fees and allowances to be made under the Act. A constable appointed under the statute is to be subject to the authority of the chief constable of the county, riding, or division. From and after the 24th of March next the 13 and 14 Charles II., sections 15, 16, 17, and 18, and also the 18 Geo. III., c. 19, section 4, and so much of the statute 2 William and Mary, c. 5, as requires a sheriff, or under sheriff or constable to be aiding and assisting at any distress for rent or to swear any appraiser thereof, shall be repealed, and no oath shall be required after the day mentioned from such appraiser.

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NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

THEA.—The art of secret writing, or writing in cipher, was, according to Polybius, invented by *Ennius*, the author of a "Treatise on Tactics." He produced twenty methods of writing in cipher which no person could unfold; but we doubt much whether they would preserve this quality in the present day.

T. H.—Some persons imagine the word "Dun" to be derived from the French *donner*—"give," implying a demand for something new; but the true origin of this expression is supposed to be due to one John Dun, a famous bailiff of the town of Lincoln, so extremely active in his business that it became a proverb when a man refused to pay his debts to say, "Why don't you Dun him?" that is, "Why don't you send Dun to arrest him?" Hence it grew into a custom, and is now as old as the days of Henry the Seventh.

W. Y. D.—The question is often asked: Does ivy injure stonework? A commission in Prussia answered in the affirmative; but the enthusiastic custodian of a well-known abbey averred that on reading of the decision of the German commission he set to work to strip the rains; but, to his astonishment, the first pinnacle he so treated he found perfectly uninjured, the corners as sharp as when they left the mason's hand, although every other part of the building uncovered by ivy is rapidly decaying.

W. H.—After a careful observation of the external conditions which favour and influence the hatching of the eggs of silkworms, *Duchaux* has prepared the following rules, by attention to which it is said that the development of the eggs can be regulated at will. First, to prevent an egg from being hatched at the usual time, it must be kept, from the period of being laid, at a temperature between 59 degrees and 68 degrees Fahr., and then exposed fourteen days to cold, three months before the time at which the hatching is desired, being subsequently treated in the usual manner. To cause an egg to hatch before the usual time it must be exposed to cold twenty days after being laid, and kept in that condition for two months, and then removed. Six weeks later it will be in the same condition as ordinary eggs, and can be treated in the same manner. In this way it is possible to have silkworms ready for hatching at any season of the year.

T. H. T.—The absurd practice which some people have of playing with any object nearest at hand while talking should be guarded against, as it is frequently an indication of vacuity of thought. We cannot point out any other cure to our correspondent than the exercise of his own resolution, which, duly directed, will always enable him to counteract bad habits. We remember to have read of a celebrated gentleman of the long robe, who had a habit of twirling and twisting a bit of packthread about his fingers whenever he was pleading—insomuch that some of his brethren began to think he could not plead without it; and one day some wagish barrister who was opposed to him in a certain cause, relying upon this notion, slyly removed the packthread out of his reach. The result was anticipated—that bit of packthread was evidently the thread of his discourse, and, having lost it, he floundered about for some time, and eventually lost his cause also.

T. C. T.—*Robinia* thrives in all parts of London; but it is rarely so planted as to ensure more than half its full development. It retains its verdure till late in autumn, then sheds its leaves quickly, and goes to rest for the winter. It has in this respect, an immense advantage over the lime, which occupies half the summer in shedding its rusty leaves. The round-headed variety, which forms such compact and glorious masses of verdure in various cities in Italy, is well worthy of attention; and so is the pyramidal one, which has a habit like that of the Lombardy poplar. It is a peculiarly graceful tree, and especially adapted for positions in towns and cities where a tree with wide-spreading branches might be objectionable. Its columns of graceful verdure may rise in the narrowest streets, or from the smallest enclosures round public buildings, etc., without shutting out light or giving rise to any objectionable drip. There are other varieties of this elegant tree equally important, such as *sophorolia*, *macrophylla*, *microphylla*, and *Decaisne*.

KATH BOVA FIDE.—We have a very good opinion of your handwriting; the perusal of your pretty letter is very cheering amidst the drudgery we have to get through. What a pleasant thing it would be if all the other letters were as nice as yours is. We should then accomplish our task in half the time. We are afraid that you can do very little about the stoutness, it is an insidious enemy which creeps slowly over many good-tempered folks of sedentary habits; but you must combat it and consider yourself victorious if you prevent it

increase. The weapons to be used in this warfare are abstinence from fluids of every kind as much as possible, a diminution of the quantity of sleep, and an increase of out-door exercise. To be practical, suppose for the future you take one cup of tea less than usual both at breakfast and tea, an hour's less rest in bed, and an hour's more exercise in the open air. Patrols also the boys with the weights and scales occasionally; that you may keep well informed of the result of the experiment. Then as to your request about the "beau." What a lot of happiness would be ours if we could gratify all the aspirations of all the young ladies who write us on this score. Alas! we are obliged, as a rule, to leave them to choose for themselves; a course they would inevitably take even if we were ever rash enough to make a suggestion. So much impressed however were we by your letter that with great discretion—we did not show your letter—no, we carefully avoid such gauderies as that—with much discretion we mentioned the subject in a quarter that might be likely as we thought. Judging by our friend's countenance, he was certainly interested in it not taken by the portrait we placed before him. What did he say? He hardly said anything. There was a confused muttering about *Fair Rosamond's* bower and the silken clue. He seemed to think that you made a mistake about blue eyes; in fact on a subsequent occasion he said he was sure you had not the bad taste to like a man who had blue eyes. You were not to be another *Fair Rosamond*, nothing was farther from his thoughts, and the silken thread was to minister to your happiness! He thought the clue was ingenious, that was all; we have been unable to glean any more from him.

IN THE NEXT.

Gather them close to your loving heart—
Cradle them on your breast;
They will soon enough leave your brooding care—
Soon enough mount youth's topmost stair—
Little ones in the nest.

Fret not that the children's hearts are gay,
That the restless feet will run;
There may come a time, in the by-and-by,
When you'll sit in your lonely room and sigh
For a sound of childish fun;

When you'll long for the repetition sweet
That sounded through each room,
Of "mother," "mother," the dear love-calls
That will echo long in the silent halls
And add to their stately gloom.

There may come a time when you'll long to hear
The eager boyish tread,
The tuneless whistle, the clear shrill shout,
The busy bustling in and out,
And the patter overhead.

When the boys and girls are all grown up,
And scattered far and wide,
Or gone to that beautiful golden shore
Where sickness and death come never more,
You will miss them from your side.

Then gather them close to your loving heart—
Cradle them on your breast;
They will soon enough leave your brooding care—
Soon enough mount youth's topmost stair—
Little ones in the nest.

M. A. K.

TOM, twenty-seven, 5ft. 7in., dark hair and eyes, and is a tradesman. Respondent must be about twenty-five, and able to keep a house clean.

HARRY S., twenty-five, 5ft. 10in., handsome, and in the Navy. Respondent must be about his own age, and not object to go abroad.

DANIEL, twenty-three, tall, handsome, affectionate, and a mechanic. Respondent must be fair, domesticated, and amiable.

ELIZA, twenty, medium height, pretty, knows how to cook a dinner, and is affectionate. Would like a husband who can keep a home and wife comfortable.

FRANK, thirty, rather short, stout, and a tradesman. Respondent must be short, a native of Derbyshire, and about twenty-seven.

KATHERINE, twenty, tall, dark, and pretty. Respondent must be about twenty-two, good looking, and in a good situation.

THOMAS, twenty-three, tall, considered handsome, and loving. Respondent must be tall, well educated, and about his own age.

EMMA W., nineteen, short, stout, pretty, and a good needlewoman. Respondent should be a young mechanic, tall, dark, handsome, well educated, and have a loving heart.

CLARA, twenty, tall, pretty, well educated, intelligent, good pianist, and can sing. Respondent must be about twenty-three, tall, handsome, who has a little business, and of a kind disposition.

HONOR G., twenty-one, medium height, brown eyes, loving, and domesticated. Respondent must not be over twenty-three, dark, handsome, fond of home and children.

ALFRED C., twenty-seven, rather tall, handsome, and has expectations. Respondent must be a young lady about twenty-three, not short but middle height, and loving.

MARY, seventeen, medium height, pretty, auburn hair, a brunette, can play the piano, and can sing. Respondent must be a respectable young man not more than twenty-one.

PHILIP W., twenty-two, tall, rather stout, dark moustache, and able to keep a wife. Respondent must be a servant about nineteen, thoroughly domesticated and loving.

WILLIAM, twenty-seven, 6ft., handsome, Night moustache, loving and in the Army. Would like to marry a tall young lady, who is pretty, loving, and about his own age.

HARRIET, twenty-one, medium height, gray eyes, light-brown hair, and the only daughter of a tradesman. Respondent must be about thirty, handsome, and a loving

young man, who is fond of children; a mechanic preferred.

KIRBY, twenty, average height, rather stout, has light curly hair, and is loving. Would like to correspond with a young man who is tall, handsome, and able to make a wife happy.

AMT, twenty, medium height, light complexion and loving. Respondent must be about twenty-five, tall, handsome, loving, fond of home and children, and able to keep a wife comfortable.

SAMUEL, twenty-five, 5ft. 8in., dark-brown eyes, fair complexion, loving, and a tradesman's son. Respondent must be about eighteen, tall, dark, good figure, and fond of children.

LOUISE, twenty, medium height, light-brown hair and eyes, fair complexion, accomplished, domesticated, and loving. Respondent must be a gentleman in a good position.

ROBERT, 5ft. 11in., good looking, dark hair and eyes, with whiskers and moustache, wants to marry a rather nice, good-looking young lady, tall, amiable, with a small income.

MILLY W., twenty-two, average height, light hair, blue eyes, a brunette, good pianist, and loving. Respondent must not be over twenty-three, handsome, and in a good situation.

LUCY S. F., eighteen, medium height, fair complexion, brown hair and eyes, rather pretty, wishes to marry a young gentleman of light complexion, rather tall, and handsome.

BEN H., twenty-one, 5ft. 9in., light-brown hair, and blue eyes, in a large business. Respondent must be a tradesman's daughter, about eighteen, of a loving disposition.

HARRY, twenty, tall, fresh complexion, dark-brown hair, handsome in a good position, would like to correspond with a young lady, tall, dark, handsome, fond of music and dancing.

I. S., nineteen, medium height, dark, handsome, loving, domesticated, fond of home; would make a good wife. Respondent must be dark, good looking, able to keep a wife, and possess a loving heart.

BESSIE P. would like to marry a young midshipman in the Royal Navy, he must be tall, dark, very handsome, and about twenty. "Bessie" is rather dark, very pretty, and is seventeen.

GEORGINA, twenty-seven, short, a domestic, fair, blue eyes, and can make a home comfortable. Respondent must be dark, about twenty-six or thirty, steady, loving, fond of home, and a respectable mechanic; a widower preferred.

COMMUNICATIONS RECEIVED:

GEORGE S. is responded to by—"Alice F.," who thinks she is all he requires, being of medium height, with light-brown hair, large gray eyes, fond of children, can be very loving, plays the piano very well, and is fond of singing.

JAMES B.—"Selby," twenty, tall and fair; wishes to go to America.

LALLA ROOKEE by—"Harry S.," twenty, fair, rather handsome, although not a tradesman is in a good position.

M. M. by—"Alma," twenty-two, tall, fair, blue eyes, light-brown hair, good tempered, and would make a good wife to a loving husband.

P. K. S. by—"J. S. C.," twenty-six, tall, fine looking, gray eyes, dark hair, domesticated, fond of home, good tempered and can cook well.

MERTMAN by—"M. F. M.," twenty-three, tall, fair, rather stout, fond of music and singing, and in a good position for a tradesman's daughter.

LUCY T. by—"A Good Templar," in a good business of his own, and has an independence in expectation; he is twenty-eight, 5ft. 9in., dark, gentlemanly, and musical.

SAMUEL H. by—"Sophie," twenty-seven, rather short, auburn hair, fair complexion, domesticated, and very loving; if "Samuel H." could overlook a plain face he would gain a good wife.

A LOVER OF SAILORS by—"Ben Bowling," thirty, 5ft. 8in., light hair and eyes, loving, fond of children, has a good berth in the Navy, and a little money in a bank; by—"George May," twenty-six, 5ft. 7in., loving disposition, a testataller, and a seaman in the Navy; and by—"White Ensign," twenty-five, 5ft. 7in., dark complexion, and is a seaman in the Navy.

STUDDING SAIL JACK and **BILL HALTARDS** by—"Two Loving Devonshire Lassies," aged eighteen, one of the "Devonshire Lassies" is rather tall, with light curly hair, and would like to hear from "Studding Sail Jack," the other is tall, genteel, with dark-brown hair, an excellent singer, and would like to hear from "Bill Haltards."

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